

670 SSNHM





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025



From a mezzotint by George Zobel after the picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

The Riverside Literature Series

JOHNSON AND GOLDSMITH

ESSAYS BY

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

EDITED WITH

INTRODUCTION, NOTES, AND STUDY EQUIPMENT BY

MABEL A. BESSEY

*Instructor in English, Bay Ridge High School
Brooklyn, New York*



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

BOSTON • NEW YORK • CHICAGO • DALLAS

SAN FRANCISCO

The Riverside Press Cambridge

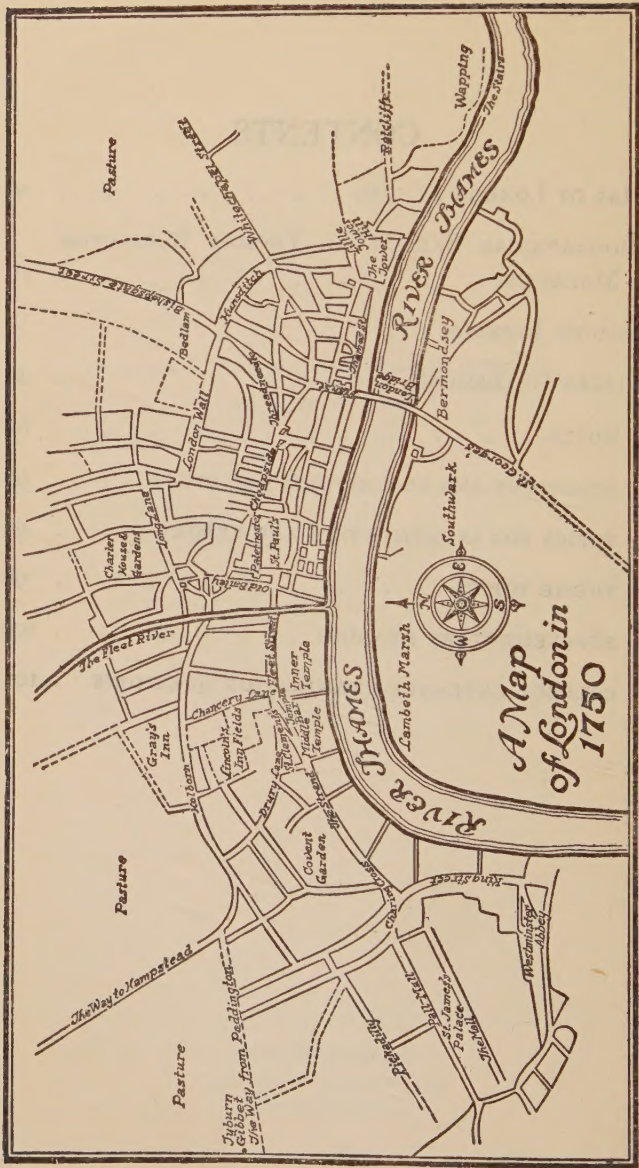
COPYRIGHT, 1930, BY HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

CONTENTS

MAP OF LONDON IN 1750	vi
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY	vii
SAMUEL JOHNSON	i
OLIVER GOLDSMITH	49
NOTES	69
QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY . . .	96
TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND REPORT . . .	99
THEME TOPICS	99
SUPPLEMENTARY READING	100
COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS .	101



BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY (1800–1859)

To many of us an encyclopædia is merely a storehouse of facts, a set of volumes, all very heavy and all very dry. Our inclination is to turn hurriedly to the volume containing some desired information and, having found it, to read it and to return the volume straightway to its shelf. Literary excellence, style, pleasurable reading are qualities rarely linked with such a book. Yet it is here that we may find two essays, at least, of arresting clearness, vividness, and abiding interest: Macaulay's brief surveys of the lives of Samuel Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith. These, together with essays on Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, John Bunyan, and William Pitt, were written at the request of the editor, Adam Black, and appeared first in 1856 in the eighth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Thomas Babington Macaulay stands as a great essayist of the nineteenth century. He is in contrast to the men who wrote in the early half of the century and to some of the later group, in that he was not merely a spectator of life. He both wrote and acted. The writers of the early nineteenth century, Coleridge, Lamb, De Quincey, were curiously detached from public life both by inclination and circumstance. Carlyle, Newman, Matthew Arnold, of the second half of the century, were interested in public affairs only from the writer's point of view. Macaulay, on the other hand, was fitted both by temperament and experience to provide vital, practical comments on the

affairs of his day. He was a lawyer, a member of Parliament by the time he was thirty, a brilliant and effective orator and politician. The traits that made him successful in his rôle as political leader and speaker carried over into his journalistic work. Two qualities above others should be here mentioned: the capacity for remembering facts and assembling them rapidly in vast quantities, and the fondness for the dramatic effect which could be secured by exaggerated, vivid description, and sharp contrast.

To him may be given the credit for perfecting the form of the historical essay and establishing it as a type. It was his delight to depict in miniature some bright period of history or some great statesman or writer; to present within a limited space the main outlines of the period or the life; to embellish his writing with sparkling anecdote, conjecture, and telling reference; to reveal himself a master in the art of compactness, and to provide for his readers an unforgettable narrative. He deliberately adapted the style of his essays to the popular taste. According to his own statement, this purpose demanded a striking and animated manner of writing, a "style even sometimes viciously florid, a bold, dashing, scene-painting manner which always succeeds in magazine-writing." Both in the essay on Johnson and in the essay on Goldsmith these characteristics of Macaulay are obvious.

Macaulay came of good old Scotch stock. His father, Zachary Macaulay, a West Indian merchant, was a descendant of a Scotch line of Anglican clergymen. He was an ardent Whig and devoted his whole energy to the cause of anti-slavery and to the editing of an abolitionist periodical called *The Christian Observer*. His mother was an English Quaker girl from Bristol.

Thomas was born October 25, 1800, at Rothley Temple, Leicestershire.

Macaulay's home life was a combination of plain living and high thinking. We read of stimulating discussion, of association with people of note in politics and reform, and of great friendliness and affection among the members of the family. There was, however, at all times a rigid insistence on the forms and discipline of religion: daily prayers, two sermons on Sunday read at home in addition to the regular church service, no walks except those to and from church.

Macaulay's inclination to a literary career revealed itself early. Before he was eight he had written a *Compendium of Universal History*, which dealt with the leading events from the creation to 1800; and had indulged in a romance in three cantos, following the style of Sir Walter Scott, which he called *The Battle of Cheviot*. Moreover, he gave promise at this time of his later power as a conversationalist which made him so popular in London society, and was a constant wonder to his father's guests because of his gayety, the ease with which he rhymed, and his droll, precocious talk.

Of his two sisters, Hannah and Margaret, we hear little except as they affected Macaulay, who had for them such a warmth of love and close intellectual sympathy that there seems to have been throughout his life no room for other ties.

To his son, Zachary Macaulay gave the best schooling England offered. From the age of twelve until he entered college at eighteen, Thomas attended a private school at Shelford near Cambridge. At Trinity College, Cambridge, he studied what he would and discarded what he would, as he did all through his life. For mathematics he had a "distinguished repugnance,"

then and always, and so failed to secure some of the highly coveted university honors. But in the classics, in history, and in debate, he won renown: a medal for the poem *Pompeii*, a scholarship in Latin, a fellowship which gave him an income at a time most sorely needed.

The fellowship was awarded in 1824, and during this year Macaulay contributed several articles of merit to Knight's *Quarterly Magazine*. In the following year, he was invited to contribute to the famous *Edinburgh Review*, then at the height of its power both in its views on reform and in its literary judgments. His first contribution to this periodical was an essay on Milton. This at once opened the doors of literary society to the young man and augured for him the fame which afterwards became his. His connection with *The Edinburgh Review*, begun so auspiciously, lasted about twenty years and proved to be a happy vehicle for his particular type of genius.

In 1826, Macaulay was admitted to the bar, a calling for which he had but little inclination. Nor was he ever actively engaged in legal practice, so overshadowed was any interest he might have in the law by his literary and political aspirations.

The strictly political life of Macaulay dates from 1830, when he was brought into Parliament by the Marquis of Lansdowne as a member for his "pocket borough" of Calne. He threw himself with ardor into the life of the House of Commons. It was just at the time when the struggle over the Reform Bill was at its height, an issue which Macaulay's eloquence could and did support; indeed, it is largely due to Macaulay's labor that the reform measures passed in 1832. In January of the following year, Macaulay took his seat as one of

the two members for Leeds; in July, he again made one of his famous speeches, this time defending the Government of India Bill.

It is quite plain that if Macaulay had taken seriously to politics at this juncture he would have made a name for himself among English statesmen, or at least among English orators. The speeches he delivered were enthusiastically received, he stood high with the ministers of a party just coming into power, he had the courage of his convictions, he had the wide erudition that has been a tradition with English statesmen, and he had the practical ability to conduct a political canvass.

Financial difficulties, however, made it necessary that the young man begin to consider earning a living. Politics offered a precarious livelihood; literature, he had always considered merely relaxation; never a means of support. "I have chosen," he says, "my own topics, taken my own time, and dictated my own terms. The thought of becoming a bookseller's hack, of spurring a jaded fancy to reluctant exertion, of filling sheets with trash merely that sheets may be filled, is horrible to me." Consequently, the offer of a seat in the Supreme Council of India, created by the New India Act, was providential. The salary of the office was fixed at ten thousand pounds, out of which Macaulay calculated to be able to save about thirty thousand pounds, in five years. In February, 1834, he sailed for Madras, accompanied by his sister Hannah.

His four years in India saw further evidence of his eagerness to reform; good judgment and practical wisdom marked all that he did. He vindicated the liberty of the press, maintained the equality of Europeans and natives before the law, and reorganized the system of national education. His views, unfortunately, made

him many enemies in Anglo-Indian society, and this caused him to withdraw more and more to the companionship of books. He half determined to abandon politics and devote himself wholly to letters. He desired to undertake some great historical work which might be at once "the business and the amusement" of his life, a desire which was afterwards fulfilled in his monumental *History of England*.

In 1838, he returned to England, and reëntered Parliament as the member for Edinburgh. In 1839, he entered Lord Melbourne's cabinet as Secretary of War. His parliamentary labors were not so heavy but that he could devote much time to his literary career. It was at this time that he began the famous *History of England from the Accession of James II*, and, in 1842, he published *The Lays and Ballads of Ancient Rome*, his one serious excursion into the field of poetry. At this time also, there appeared in *The Edinburgh Review* the famous essays on Clive, Hastings, Frederick the Great, Addison, and Chatham. He numbered among his friends some of the most eminent literary men that London then contained, and the society of such men as Henry Hallam, Sydney Smith, Lord Stanhope, and Charles Grenville, together with the delight which he found in books, formed the only recreation that he seemed to need. Upon the return of the Whigs to power in 1845, he was again elected member of Parliament for Edinburgh. In 1846, he took the office of Paymaster-General of the Army; but the following year, owing to his too frank partisanship of some rather unpopular measures, he was defeated at the general election.

In 1848 appeared the first two volumes of the *History*, down to the accession of William and Mary. In 1849,

he was elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University. The last ten years of his life saw his return to Parliament through the efforts of his constituents, and a continuation of the *History of England*; Volumes III and IV, completing the year 1695, appeared in 1855; but the magnificence of his plan as set forth in his opening chapter precluded any possibility of its completion in one lifetime. The fragmentary fifth volume was published after his death.

While working on the *History*, he found time to contribute important work to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, but, because of his failing health, all endeavor could be but intermittent. The old fire and vigor had passed. On December 28, 1859, he died, one year after he had been made a peer of the realm — Baron Macaulay of Rothley. On the 9th of January, 1860, he was buried in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey.

In appearance Macaulay is described as a man well preserved, with a shaggy brow, with clothes very likely ill-adjusted and ill-fitting, and with gloves that were never buttoned. We have two pen-pictures of him, one, as a talker, by his nephew Sir George Trevelyan.

Sitting bolt upright, his hands resting on the arms of his chair or folded on the handle of his walking-stick; knitting his great eyebrows if the subject was one that had to be thought out as he went along, or brightening from the forehead downwards when a burst of humor was coming; his massive features and honest glance suited well with the manly sentiments which he set forth in his pleasant sonorous voice and in his racy and admirably intelligible language. To get at his meaning, people had never the need to think twice, and they certainly had seldom the time.

Another is of Macaulay as seen between 1844 and 1846, in the House of Commons:

He was well toward fifty then, but sturdy — with the firm tread of a man who could do his three or four leagues of walking — if need were; beetle-browed; his clothes ill-adjusted; his neck bundled in a big swathing of cravat. There was silence when he rose; there was nothing orator-like in his bearing; rather awkward in his pose; having scorn, too, for any of the graces of elocution. But he was clear, emphatic, direct, with a great swift river of words all bearing toward definite aim. Words tripped to his tongue as easily as to his pen. But there were no delicate modulation of voice; no art of pantomime; no conscious or unconscious assumption of graceful attitudes; and when subject-matter enfevered and kindled . . . him there was the hurry and the overstrained voice of extreme earnestness.¹

In politics, he early accepted the principles of the Whigs, and throughout his life stood for religious toleration, moderate democracy, and a sincere regard for humanity. He was, too, a practical politician, understanding the immediate motives which moved masses of men. He could stir any audience. As in his essays so in his speeches, he understood the value of directness and simplicity of statement. The gift was his to comprehend the thoughts and feelings of the average Englishman of his day, and to express those thoughts and feelings clearly and sincerely.

Popularity was his in spite of the fact that there were certain arts of the politician that he could not and would not learn. He could not truckle; he could not hobnob with clients who made vulgar claims upon him; he could not make domiciliary visits "to kiss the babies — whether of patrons or of editors"; he could not listen to twaddle from visiting committees without breaking into a righteous wrath that hurt his chances.

In spite of his success as a statesman, Macaulay was

¹ *English Lands, Letters, and Kings*, vol. iv, "The Later Georges to Victoria," by Donald Grant Mitchell, Charles Scribner's Sons.

preëminently "the man of letters." He lived in his historical researches, and his whole interest was given to the particular man or time of which he happened to be writing. His nephew says of him that he could assimilate printed pages more quickly than others could glance over them. Whatever he read was stamped upon his mind instantaneously and permanently, and he read everything — from the works of the ancient Fathers of the Church to English political pamphlets and modern street ballads — no printed matter came amiss. And all that he read he could reproduce at a moment's notice. On his four months' trip to India, it is reported that he was able to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil, Horace, Cæsar's *Commentaries*, Bacon's *De Augmentis*, Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, *Don Quixote*, Gibbon's *Rome*, Mill's *India*, all the seventy volumes of Voltaire, Sismondi's *History of France*, and the seven thick folios of the *Biographia Britannica*. As he carried into Parliament the authority of a great writer, so he wrote books with the authority of a practical politician. He had the true instinct of affairs.

Perhaps the greatest contribution Macaulay has made to posterity is his abomination of the ambiguous or the obscure. "Our writers forget," he remarks, "the all important art of making meaning pellucid." Always he keeps within the reader's grasp. His sentences are usually short, and if long, are symmetrical and neatly arranged. His very tricks of style — repetitions instead of pronouns, overstatements for emphasis, antithesis for heightened contrast, flat downrightness of assertion — are devices of simplification.

In his essays and sketches, his aim was to entertain and to instruct. These ends are furthered by his rich

store of allusion. His pages throng with "figures from history, ancient and modern, sacred and secular: characters from plays and novels, from Plautus to Walter Scott and Jane Austen." Yet in all his writings it is necessary to guard against the distortion involved in exaggerated contrasts and overstatement. Macaulay was not fond of qualifications, and was often willing to be inaccurate rather than dull.

His life was a happy one, happy in social intercourse, happy in the solitude of his study. He was devoted to his home and enjoyed being a genial host. His freedom from financial cares in his later years meant to him that he could indulge his generosity and enjoy his friends. We read of "a goose for Michaelmas, a chine and oysters for Christmas Eve, excellent ale on Lord Mayor's Day." His likes and dislikes indicate a certain rigidity and narrowness of nature. His nephew says: "In books, as in people and places, he loved that, and loved that only, to which he had been accustomed from boyhood upwards." He made few new friends, though he grappled his old ones "with hooks of steel." He seems to have been even-tempered, devoted to his family, healthful and well-balanced. His pleasures were simple ones. He never hunted, never fished, rarely rode, yet now and then among his thorn-trees and the rhododendrons the May mornings were "delicious" to him. His biographer says of him that with children he was beyond comparison the best of playfellows, unrivaled in the invention of games and never weary of repeating them. He wrote long letters to his favorites; he addressed pretty little poems to them on their birthdays, and composed long nursery rhymes for their edification. While overwhelmed with historical labors and grudging the demands of society, he would dawdle

away whole mornings with them. He would build up a den with newspapers behind the sofa, and act the part of brigand or tiger; or take them to the Tower or the Zoölogical Gardens. Obviously he was the ideal uncle — the uncle of optimistic fiction, but with qualifications for the task such as few fictitious uncles can possess. He left behind him, when he died, a great and honorable name, and the memory of a life “every action of which was as clear and transparent as one of his own sentences.”

SAMUEL JOHNSON

SAMUEL JOHNSON, one of the most eminent English writers of the eighteenth century, was the son of Michael Johnson, who was, at the beginning of that century, a magistrate of Lichfield, and a bookseller of great note in the midland counties. Michael's abilities and attainments seem to have been considerable. He was so well acquainted with the contents of the volumes which he exposed to sale, that the country rectors of Staffordshire and Worcestershire thought him an oracle on points of learning. Between him and the clergy, indeed, there was a strong religious and political sympathy. He was a zealous churchman, and, though he had qualified himself for municipal office by taking the oaths to the sovereigns in possession, was to the last a Jacobite in heart. At his house, a house which is still pointed out to every traveler who visits Lichfield, Samuel was born on the 18th of September, 1709. In the child, the physical, intellectual, and moral peculiarities which afterwards distinguished the man were plainly discernible — great muscular strength accompanied by much awkwardness and many infirmities; great quickness of parts, with a morbid propensity to sloth and procrastination; a kind and generous heart, with a gloomy and irritable temper. He had inherited from his ancestors a scrofulous taint, which it was beyond the power of medicine to remove. His parents were weak enough to believe that the royal touch was a specific for this malady. In his third year he was taken up to London, inspected by the court surgeon, prayed

over by the court chaplains, and stroked and presented with a piece of gold by Queen Anne. One of his earliest recollections was that of a stately lady in a diamond stomacher and a long black hood. Her hand was applied in vain. The boy's features, which were originally noble and not irregular, were distorted by his malady. His cheeks were deeply scarred. He lost for a time the sight of one eye, and he saw but very imperfectly with the other. But the force of his mind overcame every impediment. Indolent as he was, he acquired knowledge with such ease and rapidity that at every school to which he was sent he was soon the best scholar. From sixteen to eighteen he resided at home, and was left to his own devices. He learned much at this time, though his studies were without guidance and without plan. He ransacked his father's shelves, dipped into a multitude of books, read what was interesting and passed over what was dull. An ordinary lad would have acquired little or no useful knowledge in such a way, but much that was dull to ordinary lads was interesting to Samuel. He read little Greek, for his proficiency in that language was not such that he could take much pleasure in the masters of Attic poetry and eloquence. But he had left school a good Latinist, and he soon acquired, in the large and miscellaneous library of which he now had the command, an extensive knowledge of Latin literature. That Augustan delicacy of taste which is the boast of the great public schools of England he never possessed. But he was early familiar with some classical writers who were quite unknown to the best scholars in the sixth form at Eton. He was peculiarly attracted by the works of the great restorers of learning. Once, while searching for some apples, he found a huge folio volume of Petrarch's works. The

name excited his curiosity, and he eagerly devoured hundreds of pages. Indeed, the diction and versification of his own Latin compositions show that he had paid at least as much attention to modern copies from the antique as to the original models.

While he was thus irregularly educating himself, his family was sinking into hopeless poverty. Old Michael Johnson was much better qualified to pore upon books, and to talk about them, than to trade in them. His business declined; his debts increased; it was with difficulty that the daily expenses of his household were defrayed. It was out of his power to support his son at either university, but a wealthy neighbor offered assistance, and, in reliance on promises which proved to be of very little value, Samuel was entered at Pembroke College, Oxford. When the young scholar presented himself to the rulers of that society, they were amazed not more by his ungainly figure and eccentric manners than by the quantity of extensive and curious information which he had picked up during many months of desultory but not unprofitable study. On the first day of his residence, he surprised his teachers by quoting Macrobius; and one of the most learned among them declared that he had never known a freshman of equal attainments.

At Oxford, Johnson resided during about three years. He was poor, even to raggedness; and his appearance excited a mirth and a pity which were equally intolerable to his haughty spirit. He was driven from the quadrangle of Christ Church by the sneering looks which the members of that aristocratical society cast at the holes in his shoes. Some charitable person placed a new pair at his door, but he spurned them away in a fury. Distress made him, not servile, but reckless

and ungovernable. No opulent gentleman commoner, panting for one and twenty, could have treated the academical authorities with more gross disrespect. The needy scholar was generally to be seen under the gate of Pembroke, a gate now adorned with his effigy, haranguing a circle of lads, over whom, in spite of his tattered gown and dirty linen, his wit and audacity gave him an undisputed ascendancy. In every mutiny against the discipline of the college, he was a ringleader. Much was pardoned, however, to a youth so highly distinguished by abilities and acquirements. He had early made himself known by turning Pope's *Messiah* into Latin verse. The style and rhythm, indeed, were not exactly Virgilian; but the translation found many admirers, and was read with pleasure by Pope himself.

The time drew near at which Johnson would, in the ordinary course of things, have become a bachelor of arts; but he was at the end of his resources. Those promises of support on which he had relied had not been kept. His family could do nothing for him. His debts to Oxford tradesmen were small indeed, yet larger than he could pay. In the autumn of 1731 he was under the necessity of quitting the university without a degree. In the following winter his father died. The old man left but a pittance, and of that pittance almost the whole was appropriated to the support of his widow. The property to which Samuel succeeded amounted to no more than twenty pounds.

His life during the thirty years which followed was one hard struggle with poverty. The misery of that struggle needed no aggravation, but was aggravated by the sufferings of an unsound body and an unsound mind. Before the young man left the university, his hereditary malady had broken forth in a singularly cruel form. He

had become an incurable hypochondriac. He said long after that he had been mad all his life, or at least not perfectly sane; and, in truth, eccentricities less strange than his would have often been thought grounds sufficient for absolving felons and for setting aside wills. His grimaces, his gestures, his mutterings, sometimes diverted and sometimes terrified people who did not know him. At a dinner table he would, in a fit of absence, stoop down and twitch off a lady's shoe. He would amaze a drawing-room by suddenly ejaculating a clause of the Lord's Prayer. He would conceive an unintelligible aversion to a particular alley, and perform a great circuit rather than see the hateful place. He would set his heart on touching every post in the streets through which he walked. If by any chance he missed a post, he would go back a hundred yards and repair the omission. Under the influence of his disease, his senses became morbidly torpid and his imagination morbidly active. At one time he would stand poring on the town clock without being able to tell the hour. At another he would distinctly hear his mother, who was many miles off, calling him by his name. But this was not the worst. A deep melancholy took possession of him, and gave a dark tinge to all his views of human nature and of human destiny. Such wretchedness as he endured has driven many men to shoot themselves or drown themselves. But he was under no temptation to commit suicide. He was sick of life, but he was afraid of death; and he shuddered at every sight or sound which reminded him of the inevitable hour. In religion he found but little comfort during his long and frequent fits of dejection, for his religion partook of his own character. The light from heaven shone on him indeed, but not in a direct line, or with its own

pure splendor. The rays had to struggle through a disturbing medium: they reached him refracted, dulled, and discolored by the thick gloom which had settled on his soul; and, though they might be sufficiently clear to guide him, were too dim to cheer him.

With such infirmities of body and of mind, this celebrated man was left, at two and twenty, to fight his way through the world. He remained during about five years in the midland counties. At Lichfield, his birth-place and his early home, he had inherited some friends and acquired others. He was kindly noticed by Henry Hervey, a gay officer of noble family, who happened to be quartered there. Gilbert Walmesley, registrar of the ecclesiastical court of the diocese — a man of distinguished parts, learning, and knowledge of the world — did himself honor by patronizing the young adventurer, whose repulsive person, unpolished manners, and squalid garb moved many of the petty aristocracy of the neighborhood to laughter or to disgust. At Lichfield, however, Johnson could find no way of earning a livelihood. He became usher of a grammar school in Leicestershire; he resided as a humble companion in the house of a country gentleman; but a life of dependence was insupportable to his haughty spirit. He repaired to Birmingham, and there earned a few guineas by literary drudgery. In that town he printed a translation, little noticed at the time and long forgotten, of a Latin book about Abyssinia. He then put forth proposals for publishing by subscription the poems of Politian, with notes containing a history of modern Latin verse; but subscriptions did not come in, and the volume never appeared.

While leading this vagrant and miserable life, Johnson fell in love. The object of his passion was Mrs.

Elizabeth Porter, a widow who had children as old as himself. To ordinary spectators, the lady appeared to be a short, fat, coarse woman, painted half an inch thick, dressed in gaudy colors, and fond of exhibiting provincial airs and graces which were not exactly those of the Queensberrys and Lepels. To Johnson, however, whose passions were strong, whose eyesight was too weak to distinguish ceruse from natural bloom, and who had seldom or never been in the same room with a woman of real fashion, his Titty, as he called her, was the most beautiful, graceful and accomplished of her sex. That his admiration was unfeigned cannot be doubted, for she was as poor as himself. She accepted, with a readiness which did her little honor, the addresses of a suitor who might have been her son. The marriage, however, in spite of occasional wranglings, proved happier than might have been expected. The lover continued to be under the illusions of the wedding day till the lady died, in her sixty-fourth year. On her monument he placed an inscription extolling the charms of her person and of her manners; and when, long after her decease, he had occasion to mention her, he exclaimed, with a tenderness half ludicrous, half pathetic, "Pretty creature!"

His marriage made it necessary for him to exert himself more strenuously than he had hitherto done. He took a house in the neighborhood of his native town, and advertised for pupils. But eighteen months passed away, and only three pupils came to his academy. Indeed, his appearance was so strange, and his temper so violent, that his schoolroom must have resembled an ogre's den. Nor was the tawdry, painted grandmother whom he called his Titty well qualified to make provision for the comfort of young gentlemen. David Garrick,

who was one of the pupils, used many years later to throw the best company of London into convulsions of laughter by mimicking the endearments of this extraordinary pair.

At length, Johnson, in the twenty-eighth year of his age, determined to seek his fortune in the capital as a literary adventurer. He set out with a few guineas, three acts of the tragedy of *Irene* in manuscript, and two or three letters of introduction from his friend Walmsley.

Never since literature became a calling in England had it been a less gainful calling than at the time when Johnson took up his residence in London. In the preceding generation, a writer of eminent merit was sure to be munificently rewarded by the government. The least that he could expect was a pension or a sinecure place; and, if he showed any aptitude for politics, he might hope to be a member of Parliament, a lord of the treasury, an ambassador, a secretary of state. It would be easy, on the other hand, to name several writers of the nineteenth century, of whom the least successful has received forty thousand pounds from the booksellers. But Johnson entered on his vocation in the most dreary part of the dreary interval which separated two ages of prosperity. Literature had ceased to flourish under the patronage of the great, and had not begun to flourish under the patronage of the public. One man of letters, indeed, Pope, had acquired by his pen what was then considered as a handsome fortune, and lived on a footing of equality with nobles and ministers of state. But this was a solitary exception. Even an author whose reputation was established, and whose works were popular—such an author as Thomson, whose *Seasons* were in every library; such an author as

Fielding, whose *Pasquin* had had a greater run than any drama since the *Beggar's Opera* — was sometimes glad to obtain, by pawning his best coat, the means of dining on tripe at a cookshop underground, where he could wipe his hands, after his greasy meal, on the back of a Newfoundland dog. It is easy, therefore, to imagine what humiliations and privations must have awaited the novice who had still to earn a name. One of the publishers to whom Johnson applied for employment measured with a scornful eye that athletic though uncouth frame, and exclaimed, "You had better get a porter's knot and carry trunks." Nor was the advice bad, for a porter was likely to be as plentifully fed and as comfortably lodged as a poet.

Some time appears to have elapsed before Johnson was able to form any literary connection from which he could expect more than bread for the day which was passing over him. He never forgot the generosity with which Hervey, who was now residing in London, relieved his wants during this time of trial. "Harry Hervey," said the old philosopher many years later, "was a vicious man, but he was very kind to me. If you call a dog Hervey, I shall love him." At Hervey's table Johnson sometimes enjoyed feasts which were made more agreeable by contrast. But in general he dined, and thought that he dined well, on sixpennyworth of meat and a pennyworth of bread at an alehouse near Drury Lane.

The effect of the privations and sufferings which he endured at this time was discernible to the last in his temper and his deportment. His manners had never been courtly. They now became almost savage. Being frequently under the necessity of wearing shabby coats and dirty shirts, he became a confirmed sloven.

Being often very hungry when he sat down to his meals, he contracted a habit of eating with ravenous greediness. Even to the end of his life, and even at tables of the great, the sight of food affected him as it affects wild beasts and birds of prey. His taste in cookery, formed in subterranean ordinaries and *alamode* beef-shops, was far from delicate. Whenever he was so fortunate as to have near him a hare that had been kept too long, or a meat pie made with rancid butter, he gorged himself with such violence that his veins swelled and the moisture broke out on his forehead. The affronts which his poverty emboldened stupid and low-minded men to offer to him would have broken a mean spirit into sycophancy, but made him rude even to ferocity. Unhappily, the insolence which, while it was defensive, was pardonable and in some sense respectable, accompanied him into societies where he was treated with courtesy and kindness. He was repeatedly provoked into striking those who had taken liberties with him. All the sufferers, however, were wise enough to abstain from talking about their beatings, except Osborne, the most rapacious and brutal of booksellers, who proclaimed everywhere that he had been knocked down by the huge fellow whom he had hired to puff the Harleian Library.

About a year after Johnson had begun to reside in London, he was fortunate enough to obtain regular employment from Cave, an enterprising and intelligent bookseller, who was proprietor and editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. That journal, just entering on the ninth year of its long existence, was the only periodical work in the kingdom which then had what would now be called a large circulation. It was, indeed, the chief source of parliamentary intelligence. It was not then

safe, even during a recess, to publish an account of the proceedings of either House without some disguise. Cave, however, ventured to entertain his readers with what he called *Reports of the Debates of the Senate of Lilliput*. France was Blefuscu; London was Mildendo; pounds were sprugs; the Duke of Newcastle was the Nardac Secretary of State; Lord Hardwicke was the Hugo Hickrad; and William Pulteney was Wingul Pulnub. ~~To write the speeches was, during several years, the business of Johnson.~~ He was generally furnished with notes — meager indeed and inaccurate — of what had been said; but sometimes he had to find argument and eloquence, both for the Ministry and for the Opposition. He was himself a Tory, not from rational conviction — for his serious opinion was that one form of government was just as good or as bad as another — but from mere passion, such as inflamed the Capulets against the Montagues, or the Blues of the Roman circus against the Greens. In his infancy he had heard so much talk about the villanies of the Whigs and the dangers of the Church, that he had become a furious partisan when he could scarcely speak. Before he was three, he had insisted on being taken to hear Sacheverell preach at Lichfield Cathedral, and had listened to the sermon with as much respect, and probably with as much intelligence, as any Staffordshire squire in the congregation. The work which had been begun in the nursery had been completed by the university. Oxford, when Johnson resided there, was the most Jacobitical place in England; and Pembroke was one of the most Jacobitical colleges in Oxford. The prejudices which he brought up to London were scarcely less absurd than those of his own Tom Tempest. Charles II and James II were two of the best kings that ever

reigned. Laud, a poor creature who never did, said, or wrote anything indicating more than the ordinary capacity of an old woman, was a prodigy of parts and learning, over whose tomb Art and Genius still continued to weep. Hampden deserved no more honorable name than that of "the zealot of rebellion." Even the ship money, condemned not less decidedly by Falkland and Clarendon than by the bitterest Roundheads, Johnson would not pronounce to have been an unconstitutional impost. Under a government the mildest that had ever been known in the world, under a government which allowed to the people an unprecedented liberty of speech and action, he fancied that he was a slave; he assailed the Ministry with obloquy which refuted itself, and regretted the lost freedom and happiness of those golden days in which a writer who had taken but one tenth part of the license allowed to him would have been pilloried, mangled with the shears, whipped at the cart's tail, and flung into a noisome dungeon to die. He hated dissenters and stock-jobbers, the excise and the army, septennial Parliaments, and Continental connections. He long had an aversion to the Scotch — an aversion of which he could not remember the commencement, but which, he owned, had probably originated in his abhorrence of the conduct of the nation during the Great Rebellion. It is easy to guess in what manner debates on great party questions were likely to be reported by a man whose judgment was so much disordered by party spirit. A show of fairness was, indeed, necessary to the prosperity of the magazine. But Johnson long afterwards owned that, though he had saved appearances, he had taken care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it; and, in fact, every passage which has lived, every passage which bears the marks of his higher

faculties, is put into the mouth of some member of the Opposition.

A few weeks after Johnson had entered on these obscure labors, he published a work which at once placed him high among the writers of his age. It is probable that what he had suffered during his first year in London had often reminded him of some parts of that noble poem in which Juvenal had described the misery and degradation of a needy man of letters, lodged among the pigeons' nests in the tottering garrets which overhung the streets of Rome. Pope's admirable imitations of Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles* had recently appeared, were in every hand, and were by many readers thought superior to the originals. What Pope had done for Horace, Johnson aspired to do for Juvenal. The enterprise was bold, and yet judicious. For between Johnson and Juvenal there was much in common — much more, certainly, than between Pope and Horace.

Johnson's *London* appeared without his name in May, 1738. He received only ten guineas for this stately and vigorous poem; but the sale was rapid and the success complete. A second edition was required within a week. Those small critics who are always desirous to lower established reputations ran about proclaiming that the anonymous satirist was superior to Pope in Pope's own peculiar department of literature. It ought to be remembered, to the honor of Pope, that he joined heartily in the applause with which the appearance of a rival genius was welcomed. He made inquiries about the author of *London*. Such a man, he said, could not long be concealed. The name was soon discovered; and Pope, with great kindness, exerted himself to obtain an academical degree, and the mastership of a grammar school, for the poor young poet. The attempt failed, and Johnson remained a bookseller's hack.

It does not appear that these two men -- the most eminent writer of the generation which was going out, and the most eminent writer of the generation which was coming in -- ever saw each other. They lived in very different circles -- one surrounded by dukes and earls, the other by starving pamphleteers and index-makers. Among Johnson's associates at this time may be mentioned Boyse, who, when his shirts were pledged, scrawled Latin verses, sitting up in bed with his arms through two holes in his blankets, who composed very respectable sacred poetry when he was sober, and who was at last run over by a hackney coach when he was drunk; Hoole, surnamed the metaphysical tailor, who, instead of attending to his measures, used to trace geometrical diagrams on the board where he sat cross-legged; and the penitent imposter, George Psalmanazar, who, after poring all day, in a humble lodging, on the folios of Jewish rabbis and Christian fathers, indulged himself at night with literary and theological conversation at an alehouse in the city. But the most remarkable of the persons with whom at this time Johnson consorted was Richard Savage, an earl's son, a shoemaker's apprentice, who had seen life in all its forms, who had feasted among blue ribbands in Saint James's Square, and had lain with fifty pounds' weight of irons on his legs in the condemned ward of Newgate. This man had, after many vicissitudes of fortune, sunk at last into abject and hopeless poverty. His pen had failed him. His patrons had been taken away by death, or estranged by the riotous profusion with which he squandered their bounty, and the ungrateful insolence with which he rejected their advice. He now lived by begging. He dined on venison and champagne whenever he had been so fortunate as to borrow a guinea. If

his questing had been unsuccessful, he appeased the rage of hunger with some scraps of broken meat, and lay down to rest under the piazza of Covent Garden in warm weather, and in cold weather as near as he could get to the furnace of a glasshouse. Yet, in his misery, he was still an agreeable companion. He had an inexhaustible store of anecdotes about that gay and brilliant world from which he was now an outcast. He had observed the great men of both parties in hours of careless relaxation, had seen the leaders of opposition without the mask of patriotism, and had heard the prime minister roar with laughter and tell stories not over-decent. During some months, Savage lived in the closest familiarity with Johnson; and then the friends parted, not without tears. Johnson remained in London to drudge for Cave. Savage went to the west of England, lived there as he had lived everywhere, and in 1743 died, penniless and heart-broken, in Bristol jail.

Soon after his death, while the public curiosity was strongly excited about his extraordinary character and his not less extraordinary adventures, a life of him appeared, widely different from the catchpenny lives of eminent men which were then a staple article of manufacture in Grub Street. The style was, indeed, deficient in ease and variety; and the writer was evidently too partial to the Latin element of our language. But the little work, with all its faults, was a masterpiece. No finer specimen of literary biography existed in any language, living or dead; and a discerning critic might have confidently predicted that the author was destined to be the founder of a new school of English eloquence.

The *Life of Savage* was anonymous, but it was well known in literary circles that Johnson was the writer. During the three years which followed, he produced no

important work; but he was not, and indeed could not be, idle. The fame of his abilities and learning continued to grow. Warburton pronounced him a man of parts and genius, and the praise of Warburton was then no light thing. Such was Johnson's reputation that in 1747 several eminent booksellers combined to employ him in the arduous work of preparing a *Dictionary of the English Language*, in two folio volumes. The sum which they agreed to pay him was only fifteen hundred guineas, and out of this sum he had to pay several poor men of letters who assisted him in the humbler parts of his task.

The prospectus of the *Dictionary* he addressed to the Earl of Chesterfield. Chesterfield had long been celebrated for the politeness of his manners, the brilliancy of his wit, and the delicacy of his taste. He was acknowledged to be the finest speaker in the House of Lords. He had recently governed Ireland, at a momentous conjuncture, with eminent firmness, wisdom, and humanity; and he had since become secretary of state. He received Johnson's homage with the most winning affability, and requited it with a few guineas, bestowed, doubtless, in a very graceful manner, but was by no means desirous to see all his carpets blackened with the London mud, and his soups and wines thrown to right and left over the gowns of fine ladies and the waistcoats of fine gentlemen, by an absent, awkward scholar, who gave strange starts and uttered strange growls — who dressed like a scarecrow and ate like a cormorant. During some time Johnson continued to call on his patron, but, after being repeatedly told by the porter that his lordship was not at home, took the hint, and ceased to present himself at the inhospitable door.

Johnson had flattered himself that he should have completed his *Dictionary* by the end of 1750, but it was not till 1755 that he at length gave his huge volumes to the world. During the seven years which he passed in the drudgery of penning definitions and marking quotations for transcription, he sought for relaxation in literary labor of a more agreeable kind. In 1749 he published *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, an excellent imitation of the *Tenth Satire* of Juvenal. It is in truth not easy to say whether the palm belongs to the ancient or to the modern poet. The couplets in which the fall of Wolsey is described, though lofty and sonorous, are feeble when compared with the wonderful lines which bring before us all Rome in tumult on the day of the fall of Sejanus; the laurels on the doorposts; the white bull stalking towards the Capitol; the statues rolling down from their pedestals; the flatterers of the disgraced minister running to see him dragged with a hook through the streets, and to have a kick at his carcass before it is hurled into the Tiber. It must be owned, too, that in the concluding passage the Christian moralist has not made the most of his advantages, and has fallen decidedly short of the sublimity of his Pagan model. On the other hand, Juvenal's Hannibal must yield to Johnson's Charles; and Johnson's vigorous and pathetic enumeration of the miseries of a literary life must be allowed to be superior to Juvenal's lamentation over the fate of Demosthenes and Cicero.

For the copyright of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* Johnson received only fifteen guineas.

A few days after the publication of this poem, his tragedy, begun many years before, was brought on the stage. His pupil, David Garrick, had in 1741 made his appearance on a humble stage in Goodman's Fields,

had at once risen to the first place among actors, and was now, after several years of almost uninterrupted success, manager of Drury Lane Theater. The relation between him and his old preceptor was of a very singular kind. They repelled each other strongly, and yet attracted each other strongly. Nature had made them of very different clay, and circumstances had fully brought out the natural peculiarities of both. Sudden prosperity had turned Garrick's head. Continued adversity had soured Johnson's temper. Johnson saw, with more envy than became so great a man, the villa, the plate, the china, the Brussels carpet, which the little mimic had got by repeating, with grimaces and gesticulations, what wiser men had written; and the exquisitely sensitive vanity of Garrick was galled by the thought that, while all the rest of the world was applauding him, he could obtain from one morose cynic, whose opinion it was impossible to despise, scarcely any compliment not acidulated with scorn. Yet the two Lichfield men had so many early recollections in common, and sympathized with each other on so many points on which they sympathized with nobody else in the vast population of the capital, that though the master was often provoked by the monkey-like impertinence of the pupil, and the pupil by the bearish rudeness of the master, they remained friends till they were parted by death. Garrick now brought *Irene* out, with alterations sufficient to displease the author, yet not sufficient to make the piece pleasing to the audience. The public, however, listened, with little emotion but with much civility, to five acts of monotonous declamation. After nine representations, the play was withdrawn. It is, indeed, altogether unsuited to the stage, and, even when perused in the closet, will be found

hardly worthy of the author. He had not the slightest notion of what blank verse should be. A change in the last syllable of every other line would make the versification of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* closely resemble the versification of *Irene*. The poet, however, cleared by his benefit nights, and by the sale of the copyright of his tragedy, about three hundred pounds, then a great sum in his estimation.

About a year after the representation of *Irene*, he began to publish a series of short essays on morals, manners, and literature. This species of composition had been brought into fashion by the success of *The Tatler*, and by the still more brilliant success of *The Spectator*. A crowd of small writers had vainly attempted to rival Addison. *The Lay Monastery*, *The Censor*, *The Free-thinker*, *The Plain Dealer*, *The Champion*, and other works of the same kind, had had their short day. None of them had obtained a permanent place in our literature; and they are now to be found only in the libraries of the curious. At length Johnson undertook the adventure in which so many aspirants had failed. In the thirty-sixth year after the appearance of the last number of *The Spectator*, appeared the first number of *The Rambler*. From March, 1750, to March, 1752, this paper continued to come out every Tuesday and Saturday.

From the first, *The Rambler* was enthusiastically admired by a few eminent men. Richardson, when only five numbers had appeared, pronounced it equal, if not superior, to *The Spectator*. Young and Hartley expressed their approbation not less warmly. Bubb Dodington — among whose many faults indifference to the claims of genius and learning cannot be reckoned — solicited the acquaintance of the writer. In conse-

quence, probably, of the good offices of Dodington, who was then the confidential adviser of Prince Frederick, two of his Royal Highness's gentlemen carried a gracious message to the printing-office, and ordered seven copies for Leicester House. But these overtures seem to have been very coldly received. Johnson had had enough of the patronage of the great to last him all his life, and was not disposed to haunt any other door as he had haunted the door of Chesterfield.

By the public *The Rambler* was at first very coldly received. Though the price of a number was only twopence, the sale did not amount to five hundred. The profits were therefore very small. But as soon as the flying leaves were collected and reprinted, they became popular. The author lived to see thirteen thousand copies spread over England alone. Separate editions were published for the Scotch and Irish markets. A large party pronounced the style perfect — so absolutely perfect that in some essays it would be impossible for the writer himself to alter a single word for the better. Another party, not less numerous, vehemently accused him of having corrupted the purity of the English tongue. The best critics admitted that his diction was too monotonous, too obviously artificial, and now and then turgid even to absurdity. But they did justice to the acuteness of his observations on morals and manners, to the constant precision and frequent brilliancy of his language, to the weighty and magnificent eloquence of many serious passages, and to the solemn yet pleasing humor of some of the lighter papers. On the question of precedence between Addison and Johnson — a question which, seventy years ago, was much disputed — posterity has pronounced a decision from which there is no appeal. Sir Roger, his chaplain and his

butler, Will Wimble and Will Honeycomb, the *Vision of Mirza*, the *Journal of the Retired Citizen*, the *Everlasting Club*, the *Dunmow Flitch*, the *Loves of Hilpah and Shalum*, the *Visit to the Exchange*, and the *Visit to the Abbey*, are known to everybody. But many men and women, even of highly cultivated minds, are unacquainted with Squire Bluster and Mrs. Busy, Quisquilius and Venustulus, the *Allegory of Wit and Learning*, the *Chronicle of the Revolutions of a Garret*, and the sad fate of Anningait and Ajut.

The last *Rambler* was written in a sad and gloomy hour. Mrs. Johnson had been given over by the physicians. Three days later she died. She left her husband almost broken-hearted. Many people had been surprised to see a man of his genius and learning stooping to every drudgery, and denying himself almost every comfort, for the purpose of supplying a silly, affected old woman with superfluities, which she accepted with but little gratitude. But all his affection had been concentrated on her. He had neither brother nor sister, neither son nor daughter. To him she was beautiful as the Gunnings, and witty as Lady Mary. Her opinion of his writings was more important to him than the voice of the pit of Drury Lane Theater, or the judgment of *The Monthly Review*. The chief support which had sustained him through the most arduous labor of his life was the hope that she would enjoy the fame and the profit which he anticipated from his *Dictionary*. She was gone; and in that vast labyrinth of streets, peopled by eight hundred thousand human beings, he was alone. Yet it was necessary for him to set himself, as he expressed it, doggedly to work. After three more laborious years, the *Dictionary* was at length complete.

It had been generally supposed that this great work

would be dedicated to the eloquent and accomplished nobleman to whom the prospectus had been addressed. He well knew the value of such a compliment; and therefore, when the day of publication drew near, he exerted himself to soothe, by a show of zealous and at the same time of delicate and judicious kindness, the pride which he had so cruelly wounded. Since the *Ramblers* had ceased to appear, the town had been entertained by a journal called *The World*, to which many men of high rank and fashion contributed. In two successive numbers of *The World* the *Dictionary* was, to use the modern phrase, puffed with wonderful skill. The writings of Johnson were warmly praised. It was proposed that he should be invested with the authority of a dictator, nay, of a pope, over our language, and that his decisions about the meaning and the spelling of words should be received as final. His two folios, it was said, would of course be bought by everybody who could afford to buy them. It was soon known that these papers were written by Chesterfield. But the just resentment of Johnson was not to be so appeased. In a letter written with singular energy and dignity of thought and language, he repelled the tardy advances of his patron. The *Dictionary* came forth without a dedication. In the preface the author truly declared that he owed nothing to the great, and described the difficulties with which he had been left to struggle so forcibly and pathetically that the ablest and most malevolent of all the enemies of his fame, Horne Tooke, never could read that passage without tears.

The public, on this occasion, did Johnson full justice, and something more than justice. The best lexicographer may well be content if his productions are received by the world with cold esteem. But Johnson's *Diction-*

ary was hailed with an enthusiasm such as no similar work has ever excited. It was, indeed, the first dictionary which could be read with pleasure. The definitions show so much acuteness of thought and command of language, and the passages quoted from poets, divines, and philosophers are so skilfully selected, that a leisure hour may always be very agreeably spent in turning over the pages. The faults of the book resolve themselves, for the most part, into one great fault. Johnson was a wretched etymologist. He knew little or nothing of any Teutonic language except English, which, indeed, as he wrote it, was scarcely a Teutonic language; and thus he was absolutely at the mercy of Junius and Skinner.

The *Dictionary*, though it raised Johnson's fame, added nothing to his pecuniary means. The fifteen hundred guineas which the booksellers had agreed to pay him had been advanced and spent before the last sheets issued from the press. It is painful to relate that, twice in the course of the year which followed the publication of this great work, he was arrested and carried to sponging-houses, and that he was twice indebted for his liberty to his excellent friend Richardson. It was still necessary for the man who had been formally saluted by the highest authority as dictator of the English language to supply his wants by constant toil. He abridged his *Dictionary*. He proposed to bring out an edition of Shakespeare by subscription, and many subscribers sent in their names, and laid down their money; but he soon found the task so little to his taste that he turned to more attractive employments. He contributed many papers to a new monthly journal which was called *The Literary Magazine*. Few of these papers have much interest, but among them was the

very best thing that he ever wrote, a masterpiece both of reasoning and of satirical pleasantry, the review of Jenyns's *Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*.

In the spring of 1758 Johnson put forth the first of a series of essays entitled *The Idler*. During two years these essays continued to appear weekly. They were eagerly read, widely circulated, and, indeed, impudently pirated while they were still in the original form, and had a large sale when collected into volumes. *The Idler* may be described as a second part of *The Rambler*, somewhat livelier and somewhat weaker than the first part.

While Johnson was busied with his *Idlers*, his mother, who had accomplished her ninetieth year, died at Lichfield. It was long since he had seen her; but he had not failed to contribute largely, out of his small means, to her comfort. In order to defray the charges of her funeral, and to pay some debts which she had left, he wrote a little book in a single week, and sent off the sheets to the press without reading them over. A hundred pounds were paid him for the copyright; and the purchasers had great cause to be pleased with their bargain, for the book was *Rasselas*.

The success of *Rasselas* was great, though such ladies as Miss Lydia Languish must have been grievously disappointed when they found that the new volume from the circulating library was little more than a dissertation on the author's favorite theme, the vanity of human wishes; that the Prince of Abyssinia was without a mistress, and the princess without a lover; and that the story set the hero and the heroine down exactly where it had taken them up. The style was the subject of much eager controversy. *The Monthly Review* and *The Critical Review* took different sides. Many readers pronounced the writer a pompous pedant, who would never

use a word of two syllables where it was possible to use a word of six, and who could not make a waiting-woman relate her adventures without balancing every noun with another noun and every epithet with another epithet. Another party, not less zealous, cited with delight numerous passages in which weighty meaning was expressed with accuracy and illustrated with splendor. And both the censure and the praise were merited.

About the plan of *Rasselas* little was said by the critics, and yet the faults of the plan might seem to invite severe criticism. Johnson has frequently blamed Shakespeare for neglecting the proprieties of time and place, and for ascribing to one age or nation the manners and opinions of another. Yet Shakespeare has not sinned in this way more grievously than Johnson. *Rasselas* and *Imlac*, *Nekayah* and *Pekuah*, are evidently meant to be Abyssinians of the eighteenth century, for the Europe which *Imlac* describes is the Europe of the eighteenth century; and the inmates of the Happy Valley talk familiarly of that law of gravitation which Newton discovered, and which was not fully received, even at Cambridge, till the eighteenth century. What a real company of Abyssinians would have been may be learned from Bruce's *Travels*. But Johnson, not content with turning filthy savages, ignorant of their letters and gorged with raw steaks cut from living cows, into philosophers as eloquent and enlightened as himself or his friend Burke, and into ladies as highly accomplished as Mrs. Lennox or Mrs. Sheridan, transferred the whole domestic system of England to Egypt. Into a land of harems, a land of polygamy, a land where women are married without ever being seen, he introduced the flirtations and jealousies of our ball-rooms. In a land where there is boundless liberty of divorce, wedlock is

described as the indissoluble compact. "A youth and maiden meeting by chance, or brought together by artifice, exchange glances, reciprocate civilities, go home and dream of each other. Such," says Rasselas, "is the common process of marriage." Such it may have been, and may still be, in London, but assuredly not at Cairo. A writer who was guilty of such improprieties had little right to blame the poet who made Hector quote Aristotle, and represented Julio Romano as flourishing in the days of the Oracle of Delphi.

By such exertions as have been described, Johnson supported himself till the year 1762. In that year a great change in his circumstances took place. He had from a child been an enemy of the reigning dynasty. His Jacobite prejudices had been exhibited with little disguise both in his works and in his conversation. Even in his massy and elaborate *Dictionary*, he had, with a strange want of taste and judgment, inserted bitter and contumelious reflections on the Whig party. The excise, which was a favorite resource of Whig financiers, he had designated as a hateful tax. He had railed against the commissioners of excise in language so coarse that they had seriously thought of prosecuting him. He had with difficulty been prevented from holding up the Lord Privy Seal by name as an example of the meaning of the word "renegade." A pension he had defined as pay given to a state hireling to betray his country; a pensioner, as a slave of state hired by a stipend to obey a master. It seemed unlikely that the author of these definitions would himself be pensioned. But that was a time of wonders. George III had ascended the throne, and had, in the course of a few months, disgusted many of the old friends, and conciliated many of the old enemies, of his house. The city was becoming mutinous,

Oxford was becoming loyal. Cavendishes and Bentincks were murmuring. Somersets and Wyndhams were hastening to kiss hands. The head of the Treasury was now Lord Bute, who was a Tory, and could have no objection to Johnson's Toryism. Bute wished to be thought a patron of men of letters, and Johnson was one of the most eminent and one of the most needy men of letters in Europe. A pension of three hundred a year was graciously offered, and with very little hesitation accepted.

This event produced a change in Johnson's whole way of life. For the first time since his boyhood, he no longer felt the daily goad urging him to the daily toil. He was at liberty, after thirty years of anxiety and drudgery, to indulge his constitutional indolence, to lie in bed till two in the afternoon, and to sit up talking till four in the morning, without fearing either the printer's devil or the sheriff's officer.

One laborious task, indeed, he had bound himself to perform. He had received large subscriptions for his promised edition of Shakespeare; he had lived on those subscriptions during some years; and he could not, without disgrace, omit to perform his part of the contract. His friends repeatedly exhorted him to make an effort, and he repeatedly resolved to do so. But, notwithstanding their exhortations and his resolutions, month followed month, year followed year, and nothing was done. He prayed fervently against his idleness; he determined, as often as he received the sacrament, that he would no longer doze away and trifle away his time; but the spell under which he lay resisted prayer and sacrament. His private notes at this time are made up of self-reproaches. "My indolence," he wrote on Easter Eve in 1764, "has sunk into grosser sluggishness. A

kind of strange oblivion has overspread me, so that I know not what has become of the last year." Easter, 1765, came, and found him still in the same state. "My time," he wrote, "has been unprofitably spent, and seems as a dream that has left nothing behind. My memory grows confused, and I know not how the days pass over me." Happily for his honor, the charm which held him captive was at length broken by no gentle or friendly hand. He had been weak enough to pay serious attention to a story about a ghost which haunted a house in Cock Lane, and had actually gone himself, with some of his friends, at one in the morning, to Saint John's Church, Clerkenwell, in the hope of receiving a communication from the perturbed spirit. But the spirit, though adjured with all solemnity, remained obstinately silent; and it soon appeared that a naughty girl of eleven had been amusing herself by making fools of so many philosophers. Churchill, who, confident in his powers, drunk with popularity, and burning with party spirit, was looking for some men of established fame and Tory politics to insult, celebrated the Cock Lane ghost in three cantos, nicknamed Johnson Pomposo, asked where the book was which had been so long promised and so liberally paid for, and directly accused the great moralist of cheating. This terrible word proved effectual; and in October, 1765, appeared, after a delay of nine years, the new edition of Shakespeare.

This publication saved Johnson's character for honesty, but added nothing to the fame of his abilities and learning. The preface, though it contains some good passages, is not in his best manner. The most valuable notes are those in which he had an opportunity of showing how attentively he had, during many years, observed human life and human nature. The best specimen is

the note on the character of Polonius. Nothing so good is to be found even in Wilhelm Meister's admirable examination of Hamlet. But here praise must end. It would be difficult to name a more slovenly, a more worthless, edition of any great classic. The reader may turn over play after play without finding one happy conjectural emendation, or one ingenious and satisfactory explanation of a passage which had baffled preceding commentators. Johnson had, in his prospectus, told the world that he was peculiarly fitted for the task which he had undertaken, because he had, as a lexicographer, been under the necessity of taking a wider view of the English language than any of his predecessors. That his knowledge of our literature was extensive, is indisputable. But, unfortunately, he had altogether neglected that very part of our literature with which it is especially desirable that an editor of Shakespeare should be conversant. It is dangerous to assert a negative. Yet little will be risked by the assertion that in the two folio volumes of the *English Dictionary* there is not a single passage quoted from any dramatist of the Elizabethan age except Shakespeare and Ben. Even from Ben the quotations are few. Johnson might easily, in a few months, have made himself well acquainted with every old play that was extant. But it never seems to have occurred to him that this was a necessary preparation for the work which he had undertaken. He would doubtless have admitted that it would be the height of absurdity in a man who was not familiar with the works of Æschylus and Euripides to publish an edition of Sophocles. Yet he ventured to publish an edition of Shakespeare without having ever in his life, as far as can be discovered, read a single scene of Massinger, Ford, Dekker, Webster, Marlowe, Beaumont, or

Fletcher. His detractors were noisy and scurrilous. Those who most loved and honored him had little to say in praise of the manner in which he had discharged the duty of a commentator. He had, however, acquitted himself of a debt which had long lain heavy on his conscience, and he sank back into the repose from which the sting of satire had roused him. He long continued to live upon the fame which he had already won. He was honored by the University of Oxford with a doctor's degree, by the Royal Academy with a professorship, and by the King with an interview, in which His Majesty most graciously expressed a hope that so excellent a writer would not cease to write. In the interval, however, between 1765 and 1775, Johnson published only two or three political tracts, the longest of which he could have produced in forty-eight hours, if he had worked as he worked on the *Life of Savage* and on *Rasselas*.

But, though his pen was now idle, his tongue was active. The influence exercised by his conversation, directly upon those with whom he lived, and indirectly on the whole literary world, was altogether without a parallel. His colloquial talents were, indeed, of the highest order. He had strong sense, quick discernment, wit, humor, immense knowledge of literature and of life, and an infinite store of curious anecdotes. As respected style, he spoke far better than he wrote. Every sentence which dropped from his lips was as correct in structure as the most nicely balanced period of *The Rambler*. But in his talk there were no pompous triads, and little more than a fair proportion of words in "osity" and "ation." All was simplicity, ease, and vigor. He uttered his short, weighty, and pointed sentences with a power of voice and a justness and energy

of emphasis of which the effect was rather increased than diminished by the rollings of his huge form, and by the asthmatic gaspings and puffings in which the peals of his eloquence generally ended. Nor did the laziness which made him unwilling to sit down to his desk prevent him from giving instruction or entertainment orally. To discuss questions of taste, of learning, of casuistry, in language so exact and so forcible that it might have been printed without the alteration of a word, was to him no exertion, but a pleasure. He loved, as he said, to fold his legs and have his talk out. He was ready to bestow the overflowings of his full mind on anybody who would start a subject — on a fellow-passenger in a stage-coach, or on the person who sat at the same table with him in an eating-house. But his conversation was nowhere so brilliant and striking as when he was surrounded by a few friends whose ability and knowledge enabled them, as he once expressed it, to send him back every ball that he threw. Some of these, in 1764, formed themselves into a club, which gradually became a formidable power in the commonwealth of letters. The verdicts pronounced by this conclave on new books were speedily known over all London, and were sufficient to sell off a whole edition in a day, or to condemn the sheets to the service of the trunk-maker and the pastry cook. Nor shall we think this strange when we consider what great and various talents and acquirements met in the little fraternity. Goldsmith was the representative of poetry and light literature; Reynolds, of the arts; Burke, of political eloquence and political philosophy. There, too, were Gibbon, the greatest historian, and Jones, the greatest linguist, of the age. Garrick brought to the meetings his inexhaustible pleasantry, his incomparable mimicry, and his

consummate knowledge of stage effect. Among the most constant attendants were two high-born and high-bred gentlemen, closely bound together by friendship, but of widely different characters and habits — Bennet Langton, distinguished by his skill in Greek literature, by the orthodoxy of his opinions, and by the sanctity of his life; and Topham Beauclerk, renowned for his amours, his knowledge of the gay world, his fastidious taste, and his sarcastic wit. To predominate over such a society was not easy. Yet even over such a society Johnson predominated. Burke might, indeed, have disputed the supremacy to which others were under the necessity of submitting. But Burke, though not generally a very patient listener, was content to take the second part when Johnson was present; and the club itself, consisting of so many eminent men, is to this day popularly designated as Johnson's Club.

Among the members of this celebrated body was one to whom it has owed the greater part of its celebrity, yet who was regarded with little respect by his brethren, and had not without difficulty obtained a seat among them. This was James Boswell, a young Scotch lawyer, heir to an honorable name and a fair estate. That he was a coxcomb and a bore, weak, vain, pushing, curious, garrulous, was obvious to all who were acquainted with him. That he could not reason, that he had no wit, no humor, no eloquence, is apparent from his writings. And yet his writings are read beyond the Mississippi and under the Southern Cross, and are likely to be read as long as the English exists, either as a living or as a dead language. Nature had made him a slave and an idolater. His mind resembled those creepers which the botanists call parasites, and which can subsist only by clinging round the stems, and imbibing the juices, of

stronger plants. He must have fastened himself on somebody. He might have fastened himself on Wilkes, and have become the fiercest patriot in the Bill of Rights Society. He might have fastened himself on Whitefield, and have become the loudest field-preacher among the Calvinistic Methodists. In a happy hour he fastened himself on Johnson. The pair might seem ill-matched. For Johnson had early been prejudiced against Boswell's country. To a man of Johnson's strong understanding and irritable temper, the silly egotism and adulation of Boswell must have been as teasing as the constant buzz of a fly. Johnson hated to be questioned; and Boswell was eternally catechising him on all kinds of subjects, and sometimes propounded such questions as, "What would you do, sir, if you were locked up in a tower with a baby?" Johnson was a water-drinker and Boswell was a wine-bibber, and, indeed, little better than an habitual sot. It was impossible that there should be perfect harmony between two such companions. Indeed, the great man was sometimes provoked into fits of passion, in which he said things which the small man, during a few hours, seriously resented. Every quarrel, however, was soon made up. During twenty years, the disciple continued to worship the master; the master continued to scold the disciple, to sneer at him, and to love him. The two friends ordinarily resided at a great distance from each other. Boswell practiced in the Parliament House of Edinburgh, and could pay only occasional visits to London. During those visits, his chief business was to watch Johnson, to discover all Johnson's habits, to turn the conversation to subjects about which Johnson was likely to say something remarkable, and to fill quarto notebooks with minutes of what Johnson had said. In this way were gathered the

materials out of which was afterwards constructed the most interesting biographical work in the world.

Soon after the club began to exist, Johnson formed a connection less important, indeed, to his fame, but much more important to his happiness, than his connection with Boswell. Henry Thrale — one of the most opulent brewers in the kingdom, a man of sound and cultivated understanding, rigid principles, and liberal spirit — was married to one of those clever, kind-hearted, engaging, vain, pert young women who are perpetually doing or saying what is not exactly right, but who, do or say what they may, are always agreeable. In 1765, the Thrales became acquainted with Johnson, and the acquaintance ripened fast into friendship. They were astonished and delighted by the brilliancy of his conversation. They were flattered by finding that a man so widely celebrated preferred their house to any other in London. Even the peculiarities which seemed to unfit him for civilized society — his gesticulations, his rollings, his puffings, his mutterings, the strange way in which he put on his clothes, the ravenous eagerness with which he devoured his dinner, his fits of melancholy, his fits of anger, his frequent rudeness, his occasional ferocity — increased the interest which his new associates took in him. For these things were the cruel marks left behind by a life which had been one long conflict with disease and with adversity. In a vulgar hack writer, such oddities would have excited only disgust; but in a man of genius, learning, and virtue, their effect was to add pity to admiration and esteem. Johnson soon had an apartment at the brewery in Southwark, and a still more pleasant apartment at the villa of his friends on Streatham Common. A large part of every year he passed in those abodes — abodes which must have seemed mag-

nificent and luxurious indeed, when compared with the dens in which he had generally been lodged. But his chief pleasures were derived from what the astronomer of his Abyssinian tale called "the endearing elegance of female friendship." Mrs. Thrale rallied him, soothed him, coaxed him, and, if she sometimes provoked him by her flippancy, made ample amends by listening to his reproofs with angelic sweetness of temper. When he was diseased in body and in mind, she was the most tender of nurses. No comfort that wealth could purchase, no contrivance that womanly ingenuity, set to work by womanly compassion, could devise, was wanting to his sick-room. He requited her kindness by an affection pure as the affection of a father, yet delicately tinged with a gallantry which, though awkward, must have been more flattering than the attentions of a crowd of the fools who gloried in the names, now obsolete, of buck and maccaroni. It should seem that a full half of Johnson's life, during about sixteen years, was passed under the roof of the Thrales. He accompanied the family sometimes to Bath, and sometimes to Brighton, once to Wales, and once to Paris. But he had at the same time a house in one of the narrow and gloomy courts on the north of Fleet Street. In the garrets was his library, a large and miscellaneous collection of books, falling to pieces, and begrimed with dust. On a lower floor he sometimes, but very rarely, regaled a friend with a plain dinner — a veal pie, or a leg of lamb and spinach, and a rice pudding. Nor was the dwelling uninhabited during his long absences. It was the home of the most extraordinary assemblage of inmates that ever was brought together. At the head of the establishment Johnson had placed an old lady named Williams, whose chief recommendations were her blindness and her

poverty. But, in spite of her murmurs and reproaches, he gave an asylum to another lady who was as poor as herself, Mrs. Desmoulins, whose family he had known many years before in Staffordshire. Room was found for the daughter of Mrs. Desmoulins, and for another destitute damsel, who was generally addressed as Miss Carmichael, but whom her generous host called Polly. An old quack doctor named Levett, who bled and dosed coal-heavers and hackney-coachmen, and received for fees crusts of bread, bits of bacon, glasses of gin, and sometimes a little copper, completed this strange menagerie. All these poor creatures were at constant war with each other and with Johnson's negro servant Frank. Sometimes, indeed, they transferred their hostilities from the servant to the master, complained that a better table was not kept for them, and railed or maundered till their benefactor was glad to make his escape to Streatham, or to the Mitre Tavern. And yet he who was generally the haughtiest and most irritable of mankind, who was but too prompt to resent anything which looked like a slight on the part of a purse-proud bookseller, or of a noble and powerful patron, bore patiently from mendicants, who but for his bounty must have gone to the workhouse, insults more provoking than those for which he had knocked down Osborne and bidden defiance to Chesterfield. Year after year Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Desmoulins, Polly and Levett, continued to torment him and to live upon him.

The course of life which has been described was interrupted in Johnson's sixty-fourth year by an important event. He had early read an account of the Hebrides, and had been much interested by learning that there was so near him a land peopled by a race which was still as rude and simple as in the Middle Ages. A wish to

become intimately acquainted with a state of society so utterly unlike all that he had ever seen, frequently crossed his mind. But it is not probable that his curiosity would have overcome his habitual sluggishness, and his love of the smoke, the mud, and the cries of London, had not Boswell importuned him to attempt the adventure, and offered to be his squire. At length, in August, 1773, Johnson crossed the Highland line, and plunged courageously into what was then considered, by most Englishmen, as a dreary and perilous wilderness. After wandering about two months through the Celtic region, sometimes in rude boats which did not protect him from the rain, and sometimes on small shaggy ponies which could hardly bear his weight, he returned to his old haunts with a mind full of new images and new theories. During the following year he employed himself in recording his adventures. About the beginning of 1775, his *Journey to the Hebrides* was published, and was, during some weeks, the chief subject of conversation in all circles in which any attention was paid to literature. The book is still read with pleasure. The narrative is entertaining; the speculations, whether sound or unsound, are always ingenious; and the style, though too stiff and pompous, is somewhat easier and more graceful than that of his early writings. His prejudice against the Scotch had at length become little more than matter of jest; and whatever remained of the old feeling had been effectually removed by the kind and respectful hospitality with which he had been received in every part of Scotland. It was, of course, not to be expected that an Oxonian Tory should praise the Presbyterian policy and ritual, or that an eye accustomed to the hedgerows and parks of England should not be struck by the bareness of Berwickshire and East

Lothian. But even in censure Johnson's tone is not unfriendly. The most enlightened Scotchmen, with Lord Mansfield at their head, were well pleased. But some foolish and ignorant Scotchmen were moved to anger by a little unpalatable truth which was mingled with much eulogy, and assailed him, whom they chose to consider as the enemy of their country, with libels much more dishonorable to their country than anything that he had ever said or written. They published paragraphs in the newspapers, articles in the magazines, sixpenny pamphlets, five-shilling books. One scribbler abused Johnson for being blear-eyed; another, for being a pensioner; a third informed the world that one of the doctor's uncles had been convicted of felony in Scotland, and had found that there was in that country one tree capable of supporting the weight of an Englishman. Macpherson, whose *Fingal* had been proved in the *Journey* to be an impudent forgery, threatened to take vengeance with a cane. The only effect of this threat was, that Johnson reiterated the charge of forgery in the most contemptuous terms, and walked about, during some time, with a cudgel, which, if the impostor had not been too wise to encounter it, would assuredly have descended upon him, to borrow the sublime language of his own epic poem, "like a hammer on the red son of the furnace."

Of other assailants Johnson took no notice whatever. He had early resolved never to be drawn into controversy; and he adhered to his resolution with a steadfastness which is the more extraordinary because he was, both intellectually and morally, of the stuff of which controversialists are made. In conversation he was a singularly eager, acute, and pertinacious disputant. When at a loss for good reasons, he had recourse to sophistry; and when heated by altercation, he made unsparing use

of sarcasm and invective. But when he took his pen in his hand, his whole character seemed to be changed. A hundred bad writers misrepresented him and reviled him; but not one of the hundred could boast of having been thought by him worthy of a refutation, or even of a retort. The Kenricks, Campbells, MacNicol, and Hendersons did their best to annoy him, in the hope that he would give them importance by answering them. But the reader will in vain search his works for any allusion to Kenrick or Campbell, to MacNicol or Henderson. One Scotchman, bent on vindicating the fame of Scotch learning, defied him to the combat in a detestable Latin hexameter:

Maxime, si tu vis, cupio contendere tecum.

But Johnson took no notice of the challenge. He had learned, both from his own observation and from literary history, in which he was deeply read, that the place of books in the public estimation is fixed, not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them; and that an author whose works are likely to live is very unwise if he stoops to wrangle with detractors whose works are certain to die. He always maintained that fame was a shuttlecock, which could be kept up only by being beaten back as well as beaten forward, and which would soon fall if there were only one battledore. No saying was oftener in his mouth than that fine apothegm of Bentley, that no man was ever written down but by himself.

Unhappily, a few months after the appearance of the *Journey to the Hebrides*, Johnson did what none of his envious assailants could have done, and to a certain extent succeeded in writing himself down. The disputes between England and her American colonies had reached

a point at which no amicable adjustment was possible. Civil war was evidently impending; and the Ministers seem to have thought that the eloquence of Johnson might with advantage be employed to inflame the nation against the opposition here, and against the rebels beyond the Atlantic. He had already written two or three tracts in defense of the foreign and domestic policy of the Government; and those tracts, though hardly worthy of him, were much superior to the crowd of pamphlets which lay on the counters of Almon and Stockdale. But his *Taxation no Tyranny* was a pitiable failure. The very title was a silly phrase, which can have been recommended to his choice by nothing but a jingling alliteration which he ought to have despised. The arguments were such as boys use in debating societies. The pleasantry was as awkward as the gambols of a hippopotamus. Even Boswell was forced to own that in this unfortunate piece he could detect no trace of his master's powers. The general opinion was, that the strong faculties which had produced the *Dictionary* and *The Rambler* were beginning to feel the effect of time and of disease, and that the old man would best consult his credit by writing no more.

But this was a great mistake. Johnson had failed, not because his mind was less vigorous than when he wrote *Rasselas* in the evenings of a week, but because he had foolishly chosen, or suffered others to choose for him, a subject such as he would at no time have been competent to treat. He was in no sense a statesman. He never willingly read, or thought, or talked about affairs of state. He loved biography, literary history, the history of manners; but political history was positively distasteful to him. The question at issue between the colonies and the mother country was a

question about which he had really nothing to say. He failed, therefore, as the greatest men must fail when they attempt to do that for which they are unfit; as Burke would have failed if Burke had tried to write comedies like those of Sheridan; as Reynolds would have failed if Reynolds had tried to paint landscapes like those of Wilson. Happily, Johnson soon had an opportunity of proving most signally that his failure was not to be ascribed to intellectual decay.

On Easter Eve, 1777, some persons, deputed by a meeting which consisted of forty of the first booksellers in London, called upon him. Though he had some scruples about doing business at that season, he received his visitors with much civility. They came to inform him that a new edition of the English poets, from Cowley downwards, was in contemplation, and to ask him to furnish short biographical prefaces. He readily undertook the task, a task for which he was pre-eminently qualified. His knowledge of the literary history of England since the Restoration was unrivaled. That knowledge he had derived partly from books, and partly from sources which had long been closed — from old Grub Street traditions; from the talk of forgotten poetasters and pamphleteers who had long been lying in parish vaults; from the recollections of such men as Gilbert Walmesley, who had conversed with the wits of Button's; Cibber, who had mutilated the plays of two generations of dramatists; Orrery, who had been admitted to the society of Swift; and Savage, who had rendered services of no very honorable kind to Pope. The biographer, therefore, sat down to his task with a mind full of matter. He had at first intended to give only a paragraph to every minor poet, and only four or five pages to the greatest name. But the flood of anec-

dote and criticism overflowed the narrow channel. The work, which was originally meant to consist only of a few sheets, swelled into ten volumes — small volumes, it is true, and not closely printed. The first four appeared in 1779, the remaining six in 1781.

The *Lives of the Poets* are, on the whole, the best of Johnson's works. The narratives are as entertaining as any novel. The remarks on life and on human nature are eminently shrewd and profound. The criticisms are often excellent, and, even when grossly and provokingly unjust, well deserve to be studied; for, however erroneous they may be, they are never silly. They are the judgments of a mind trammelled by prejudice and deficient in sensibility, but vigorous and acute. They therefore generally contain a portion of valuable truth which deserves to be separated from the alloy, and at the very worst they mean something — a praise to which much of what is called criticism in our time has no pretensions.

Savage's *Life* Johnson reprinted nearly as it had appeared in 1744. Whoever, after reading that life, will turn to the other lives, will be struck by the difference of style. Since Johnson had been at ease in his circumstances, he had written little and had talked much. When, therefore, he, after the lapse of years, resumed his pen, the mannerism which he had contracted while he was in the constant habit of elaborate composition was less perceptible than formerly; and his diction frequently had a colloquial ease which it had formerly wanted. The improvement may be discerned by a skillful critic in the *Journey to the Hebrides*, and in the *Lives of the Poets* is so obvious that it cannot escape the notice of the most careless reader.

Among the lives the best are, perhaps, those of

Cowley, Dryden, and Pope. The very worst is, beyond all doubt, that of Gray.

This great work at once became popular. There was, indeed, much just and much unjust censure; but even those who were loudest in blame were attracted by the book in spite of themselves. Malone computed the gains of the publishers at five or six thousand pounds. But the writer was very poorly remunerated. Intending at first to write very short prefaces, he had stipulated for only two hundred guineas. The booksellers, when they saw how far his performance had surpassed his promise, added only another hundred. Indeed, Johnson, though he did not despise, or affect to despise, money, and though his strong sense and long experience ought to have qualified him to protect his own interests, seems to have been singularly unskillful and unlucky in his literary bargains. He was generally reputed the first English writer of his time, yet several writers of his time sold their copyrights for sums such as he never ventured to ask. To give a single instance, Robertson received four thousand five hundred pounds for the *History of Charles V*; and it is no disrespect to the memory of Robertson to say that the *History of Charles V* is both a less valuable and a less amusing book than the *Lives of the Poets*.

Johnson was now in his seventy-second year. The infirmities of age were coming fast upon him. That inevitable event of which he never thought without horror was brought near to him, and his whole life was darkened by the shadow of death. He had often to pay the cruel price of longevity. Every year he lost what could never be replaced. The strange dependents to whom he had given shelter, and to whom, in spite of their faults, he was strongly attached by habit, dropped off one by one;

and in the silence of his home he regretted even the noise of their scolding-matches. The kind and generous Thrale was no more, and it would have been well if his wife had been laid beside him. But she survived to be the laughing-stock of those who had envied her, and to draw, from the eyes of the old man who had loved her beyond anything in the world, tears far more bitter than he would have shed over her grave. With some estimable and many agreeable qualities, she was not made to be independent. The control of a mind more steadfast than her own was necessary to her respectability. While she was restrained by her husband — a man of sense and firmness, indulgent to her taste in trifles, but always the undisputed master of his house — her worst offenses had been impertinent jokes, white lies, and short fits of pettishness ending in sunny good-humor. But he was gone; and she was left an opulent widow of forty, with strong sensibility, volatile fancy, and slender judgment. She soon fell in love with a music-master from Brescia, in whom nobody but herself could discover anything to admire. Her pride, and perhaps some better feelings, struggled hard against this degrading passion; but the struggle irritated her nerves, soured her temper, and at length endangered her health. Conscious that her choice was one which Johnson could not approve, she became desirous to escape from his inspection. Her manner towards him changed. She was sometimes cold and sometimes petulant. She did not conceal her joy when he left Streatham; she never pressed him to return; and if he came unbidden, she received him in a manner which convinced him that he was no longer a welcome guest. He took the very intelligible hints which she gave. He read, for the last time, a chapter of the Greek Testament in the library which had been formed by

himself. In a solemn and tender prayer, he commended the house and its inmates to the Divine protection, and, with emotions which choked his voice and convulsed his powerful frame, left forever that beloved home for the gloomy and desolate house behind Fleet Street, where the few and evil days which still remained to him were to run out. Here, in June, 1783, he had a paralytic stroke, from which, however, he recovered, and which does not appear to have at all impaired his intellectual faculties. But other maladies came thick upon him. His asthma tormented him day and night. Dropsical symptoms made their appearance. While sinking under a complication of diseases, he heard that the woman whose friendship had been the chief happiness of sixteen years of his life had married an Italian fiddler, that all London was crying shame upon her, and that the newspapers and magazines were filled with allusions to the Ephesian matron and the two pictures in *Hamlet*. He vehemently said that he would try to forget her existence. He never uttered her name. Every memorial of her which met his eye he flung into the fire. She, meanwhile, fled from the laughter and hisses of her countrymen and countrywomen to a land where she was unknown, hastened across Mont Cenis, and learned, while passing a merry Christmas of concerts and lemonade parties at Milan, that the great man with whose name hers is inseparably associated had ceased to exist.

He had, in spite of much mental and much bodily affliction, clung vehemently to life. The feeling described in that fine but gloomy paper which closes the series of his *Idlers* seemed to grow stronger in him as his last hour drew near. He fancied that he should be able to draw his breath more easily in a southern climate, and would probably have set out for Rome and Naples but

for his fear of the expense of the journey. That expense, indeed, he had the means of defraying; for he had laid up about two thousand pounds, the fruit of labors which had made the fortune of several publishers. But he was unwilling to break in upon this hoard, and he seems to have wished even to keep its existence a secret. Some of his friends hoped that the Government might be induced to increase his pension to six hundred pounds a year; but this hope was disappointed, and he resolved to stand one English winter more. That winter was his last. His legs grew weaker; his breath grew shorter; the fatal water gathered fast, in spite of incisions which he — courageous against pain, but timid against death — urged his surgeons to make deeper and deeper. Though the tender care which had mitigated his sufferings during months of sickness at Streatham was withdrawn, he was not left desolate. The ablest physicians and surgeons attended him, and refused to accept fees from him. Burke parted from him with deep emotion. Windham sat much in the sick-room, arranged the pillows, and sent his own servant to watch at night by the bed. Frances Burney, whom the old man had cherished with fatherly kindness, stood weeping at the door; while Langton, whose piety eminently qualified him to be an adviser and comforter at such a time, received the last pressure of his friend's hand within. When at length the moment, dreaded through so many years, came close, the dark cloud passed away from Johnson's mind. His temper became unusually patient and gentle; he ceased to think with terror of death and of that which lies beyond death; and he spoke much of the mercy of God and of the propitiation of Christ. In this serene frame of mind he died, on the 13th of December, 1784. He was laid a week later in

Westminster Abbey, among the eminent men of whom he had been the historian — Cowley and Denham, Dryden and Congreve, Gay, Prior, and Addison.

Since his death, the popularity of his works — the *Lives of the Poets* and perhaps *The Vanity of Human Wishes* excepted — has greatly diminished. His *Dictionary* has been altered by editors till it can scarcely be called his. An allusion to his *Rambler* or his *Idler* is not readily apprehended in literary circles. The fame even of *Rasselas* has grown somewhat dim. But, though the celebrity of the writings may have declined, the celebrity of the writer, strange to say, is as great as ever. Boswell's book has done for him more than the best of his own books could do. [The memory of other authors is kept alive by their works, but the memory of Johnson keeps many of his works alive.] The old philosopher is still among us in the brown coat with the metal buttons, and the shirt which ought to be at wash, blinking, puffing, rolling his head, drumming with his fingers, tearing his meat like a tiger, and swallowing his tea in oceans.) No human being who has been more than seventy years in the grave is so well known to us.] And it is but just to say that our intimate acquaintance with what he would himself have called the anfractuosities of his intellect and of his temper serves only to strengthen our conviction that he was both a great and a good man.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

OLIVER GOLDSMITH was one of the most pleasing English writers of the eighteenth century. He was of a Protestant and Saxon family which had been long settled in Ireland, and which had, like most other Protestant and Saxon families, been in troubled times harassed and put in fear by the native population. His father, Charles Goldsmith, studied, in the reign of Queen Anne, at the diocesan school of Elphin, became attached to the daughter of the schoolmaster, married her, took orders, and settled at a place called Pallas, in the county of Longford. There he with difficulty supported his wife and children on what he could earn, partly as a curate and partly as a farmer.

At Pallas, Oliver Goldsmith was born in November, 1728. That spot was then, for all practical purposes, almost as remote from the busy and splendid capital in which his later years were passed, as any clearing in Upper Canada or any sheep-walk in Australasia now is. Even at this day, those enthusiasts who venture to make a pilgrimage to the birthplace of the poet are forced to perform the latter part of their journey on foot. The hamlet lies far from any highroad, on a dreary plain, which in wet weather is often a lake. The lanes would break any jaunting-car to pieces; and there are ruts and sloughs through which the most strongly built wheels cannot be dragged.

When Oliver was still a child, his father was presented to a living, worth about two hundred pounds a year, in the county of Westmeath. The family accordingly

quitted their cottage in the wilderness for a spacious house on a frequented road, near the village of Lissoy. Here the boy was taught his letters by a maid servant, and was sent in his seventh year to a village school kept by an old quartermaster on half-pay, who professed to teach nothing but reading, writing, and arithmetic, but who had an inexhaustible fund of stories about ghosts, banshees, and fairies — about the great Rapparee chiefs, Baldearg O'Donnell and galloping Hogan, and about the exploits of Peterborough and Stanhope, the surprise of Monjuich, and the glorious disaster of Brihuega. This man must have been of the Protestant religion; but he was of the aboriginal race, and not only spoke the Irish language, but could pour forth unpremeditated Irish verses. Oliver early became, and through life continued to be, a passionate admirer of the Irish music, and especially of the compositions of Carolan, some of the last notes of whose harp he heard. It ought to be added that Oliver, though by birth one of the Englishry, and though connected by numerous ties with the Established Church, never showed the least sign of that contemptuous antipathy with which, in his days, the ruling minority in Ireland too generally regarded the subject majority. So far, indeed, was he from sharing in the opinions and feelings of the caste to which he belonged that he conceived an aversion to the Glorious and Immortal Memory, and, even when George the Third was on the throne, maintained that nothing but the restoration of the banished dynasty could save the country.

From the humble academy kept by the old soldier Goldsmith was removed in his ninth year. He went to several grammar schools, and acquired some knowledge of the ancient languages. His life at this time

seems to have been far from happy. He had, as appears from the admirable portrait of him at Knowle, features harsh even to ugliness. The smallpox had set its mark on him with more than usual severity. His stature was small, and his limbs ill put together. Among boys, little tenderness is shown to personal defects; and the ridicule excited by poor Oliver's appearance was heightened by a peculiar simplicity and a disposition to blunder which he retained to the last. He became the common butt of boys and masters, was pointed at as a fright in the playground, and flogged as a dunce in the schoolroom. When he had risen to eminence, those who once derided him ransacked their memory for the events of his early years, and recited repartees and couplets which had dropped from him, and which, though little noticed at the time, were supposed, a quarter of a century later, to indicate the powers which produced *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *The Deserted Village*.

In his seventeenth year Oliver went up to Trinity College, Dublin, as a sizar. The sizars paid nothing for food and tuition, and very little for lodging; but they had to perform some menial services from which they have long been relieved. They swept the court; they carried up the dinner to the fellows' table, and changed the plates and poured out the ale of the rulers of the society. Goldsmith was quartered, not alone, in a garret, on the window of which his name, scrawled by himself, is still read with interest. From such garrets many men of less parts than his have made their way to the woolsack or to the episcopal bench. But Goldsmith, while he suffered all the humiliations, threw away all the advantages of his situation. He neglected the studies of the place, stood low at the examinations, was turned down

to the bottom of his class for playing the buffoon in the lecture-room, was severely reprimanded for pumping on a constable, and was caned by a brutal tutor for giving a ball in the attic story of the college to some gay youths and damsels from the city.

While Oliver was leading at Dublin a life divided between squalid distress and squalid dissipation, his father died, leaving a mere pittance. The youth obtained his bachelor's degree and left the university. During some time, the humble dwelling to which his widowed mother had retired was his home. He was now in his twenty-first year; it was necessary that he should do something, and his education seemed to have fitted him to do nothing but to dress himself in gaudy colors, of which he was as fond as a magpie, to take a hand at cards, to sing Irish airs, to play the flute, to angle in summer, and to tell ghost stories by the fire in winter. He tried five or six professions in turn without success. He applied for ordination; but, as he applied in scarlet clothes, he was speedily turned out of the episcopal palace. He then became tutor in an opulent family, but soon quitted his situation in consequence of a dispute about play. Then he determined to emigrate to America. His relations, with much satisfaction, saw him set out for Cork on a good horse, with thirty pounds in his pocket. But in six weeks he came back on a miserable hack without a penny, and informed his mother that the ship in which he had taken his passage, having got a fair wind while he was at a party of pleasure, had sailed without him. Then he resolved to study the law. A generous kinsman advanced fifty pounds. With this sum Goldsmith went to Dublin, was enticed into a gaming-house, and lost every shilling. He then thought of medicine. A small purse was made up, and in his

twenty-fourth year he was sent to Edinburgh. At Edinburgh he passed eighteen months in nominal attendance on lectures, and picked up some superficial information about chemistry and natural history. Thence he went to Leyden, still pretending to study physic. He left that celebrated university — the third university at which he had resided — in his twenty-seventh year, without a degree, with the merest smattering of medical knowledge, and with no property but his clothes and his flute. His flute, however, proved a useful friend. He rambled on foot through Flanders, France, and Switzerland, playing tunes which everywhere set the peasantry dancing, and which often procured for him a supper and a bed. He wandered as far as Italy. His musical performances, indeed, were not to the taste of the Italians, but he contrived to live on the alms which he obtained at the gates of convents. It should, however, be observed, that the stories which he told about this part of his life ought to be received with great caution, for strict veracity was never one of his virtues; and a man who is ordinarily inaccurate in narration is likely to be more than ordinarily inaccurate when he talks about his own travels. Goldsmith, indeed, was so regardless of truth as to assert in print that he was present at a most interesting conversation between Voltaire and Fontenelle, and that this conversation took place at Paris. Now it is certain that Voltaire never was within a hundred leagues of Paris during the whole time which Goldsmith passed on the Continent.

In 1756 the wanderer landed at Dover, without a shilling, without a friend, and without a calling. He had, indeed, if his own unsupported evidence may be trusted, obtained from the University of Padua a doc-

tor's degree; but this dignity proved utterly useless to him. In England his flute was not in request; there were no convents; and he was forced to have recourse to a series of desperate expedients. He turned strolling player, but his face and figure were ill suited to the boards even of the humblest theater. He pounded drugs and ran about London with phials for charitable chemists. He joined a swarm of beggars which made its nest in Axe Yard. He was for a time usher of a school, and felt the miseries and humiliations of this situation so keenly that he thought it a promotion to be permitted to earn his bread as a bookseller's hack; but he soon found the new yoke more galling than the old one, and was glad to become an usher again. He obtained a medical appointment in the service of the East India Company, but the appointment was speedily revoked. Why it was revoked we are not told. The subject was one on which he never liked to talk. It is probable that he was incompetent to perform the duties of the place. Then he presented himself at Surgeons' Hall for examination as mate to a naval hospital. Even to so humble a post he was found unequal. By this time the schoolmaster whom he had served for a morsel of food and the third part of a bed was no more. Nothing remained but to return to the lowest drudgery of literature. Goldsmith took a garret in a miserable court, to which he had to climb from the brink of Fleet Ditch by a dizzy ladder of flagstones called Breakneck Steps. The court and the ascent have long disappeared, but old Londoners well remember both. Here, at thirty, the unlucky adventurer sat down to toil like a galley-slave.

In the succeeding six years he sent to the press some things which have survived, and many which have

perished. He produced articles for reviews, magazines, and newspapers; children's books, which, bound in gilt paper and adorned with hideous woodcuts, appeared in the window of the once far-famed shop at the corner of Saint Paul's Churchyard; *An Inquiry into the State of Polite Learning in Europe*, which, though of little or no value, is still reprinted among his works; a *Life of Beau Nash*, which is not reprinted, though it well deserves to be so; a superficial and incorrect but very readable *History of England*, in a series of letters purporting to be addressed by a nobleman to his son; and some very lively and amusing *Sketches of London Society*, in a series of letters purporting to be addressed by a Chinese traveler to his friends. All these works were anonymous, but some of them were well known to be Goldsmith's; and he gradually rose in the estimation of the booksellers for whom he drudged. He was, indeed, emphatically a popular writer. For accurate research or grave disquisition he was not well qualified by nature or by education. He knew nothing accurately: his reading had been desultory, nor had he meditated deeply on what he had read. He had seen much of the world; but he had noticed and retained little more of what he had seen than some grotesque incidents and characters which happened to strike his fancy. But, though his mind was very scantily stored with materials, he used what materials he had in such a way as to produce a wonderful effect. There have been many great writers, but perhaps no writer was ever more uniformly agreeable. His style was always pure and easy, and, on proper occasions, pointed and energetic. His narratives were always amusing; his descriptions always picturesque; his humor rich and joyous, yet not without an occasional tinge of amiable sadness. About

everything that he wrote, serious or sportive, there was a certain natural grace and decorum hardly to be expected from a man a great part of whose life had been passed among thieves and beggars, street-walkers and merry-andrews, in those squalid dens which are the reproach of great capitals.

As his name gradually became known, the circle of his acquaintance widened. He was introduced to Johnson, who was then considered as the first of living English writers; to Reynolds, the first of English painters; and to Burke, who had not yet entered Parliament, but had distinguished himself greatly by his writings and by the eloquence of his conversation. With these eminent men Goldsmith became intimate. In 1763 he was one of the nine original members of that celebrated fraternity which has sometimes been called the Literary Club, but which has always disclaimed that epithet, and still glories in the simple name of "The Club."

By this time Goldsmith had quitted his miserable dwelling at the top of Breakneck Steps, and had taken chambers in the more civilized region of the Inns of Court. But he was still often reduced to pitiable shifts. Towards the close of 1764 his rent was so long in arrear that his landlady one morning called in the help of a sheriff's officer. The debtor, in great perplexity, dispatched a messenger to Johnson; and Johnson, always friendly though often surly, sent back the messenger with a guinea, and promised to follow speedily. He came, and found that Goldsmith had changed the guinea, and was railing at the landlady over a bottle of Madeira. Johnson put the cork into the bottle, and entreated his friend to consider calmly how money was to be procured. Goldsmith said that he had a novel ready for the press. Johnson glanced at the manu-

script, saw that there were good things in it, took it to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds, and soon returned with the money. The rent was paid, and the sheriff's officer withdrew. According to one story, Goldsmith gave his landlady a sharp reprimand for her treatment of him; according to another, he insisted on her joining him in a bowl of punch. Both stories are probably true. The novel which was thus ushered into the world was *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

But before *The Vicar of Wakefield* appeared in print came the great crisis of Goldsmith's literary life. In Christmas week, 1764, he published a poem entitled *The Traveller*. It was the first work to which he had put his name, and it at once raised him to the rank of a legitimate English classic. The opinion of the most skillful critics was that nothing finer had appeared in verse since the fourth book of *The Dunciad*. In one respect, *The Traveller* differs from all Goldsmith's other writings. In general his designs were bad and his execution good. In *The Traveller* the execution, though deserving of much praise, is far inferior to the design. No philosophical poem, ancient or modern, has a plan so noble, and at the same time so simple. An English wanderer, seated on a crag among the Alps, near the point where three great countries meet, looks down on the boundless prospect, reviews his long pilgrimage, recalls the varieties of scenery, of climate, of government, of religion, of national character, which he has observed, and comes to the conclusion, just or unjust, that our happiness depends little on political institutions, and much on the temper and regulation of our minds.

While the fourth edition of *The Traveller* was on the counters of the booksellers, *The Vicar of Wakefield* appeared, and rapidly obtained a popularity which has

lasted down to our own time, and which is likely to last as long as our language. The fable is, indeed, one of the worst that ever was constructed. It wants not merely that probability which ought to be found in a tale of common English life, but that consistency which ought to be found even in the wildest fiction about witches, giants, and fairies. But the earlier chapters have all the sweetness of pastoral poetry, together with all the vivacity of comedy. Moses and his spectacles, the Vicar and his monogamy, the Sharper and his cosmogony, the Squire proving from Aristotle that relatives are related, Olivia preparing herself for the arduous task of converting a rakish lover by studying the controversy between Robinson Crusoe and Friday, the great ladies with their scandal about Sir Tomkyn's amours and Dr. Burdock's verses, and Mr. Burchell with his "Fudge!" have caused as much harmless mirth as has ever been caused by matter packed into so small a number of pages. The latter part of the tale is unworthy of the beginning. As we approach the catastrophe, the absurdities lie thicker and thicker, and the gleams of pleasantry become rarer and rarer.

The success which had attended Goldsmith as a novelist emboldened him to try his fortune as a dramatist. He wrote *The Good-Natured Man*, a piece which had a worse fate than it deserved. Garrick refused to produce it at Drury Lane. It was acted at Covent Garden in 1768, but was coldly received. The author, however, cleared by his benefit nights, and by the sale of the copyright, not less than five hundred pounds — five times as much as he had made by *The Traveller* and *The Vicar of Wakefield* together. The plot of *The Good-Natured Man* is, like almost all Goldsmith's plots, very ill-constructed. But some passages are exquisitely

ludicrous — much more ludicrous, indeed, than suited the taste of the town at that time. A canting, mawkish play, entitled *False Delicacy*, had just had an immense run. Sentimentality was all the mode. During some years, more tears were shed at comedies than at tragedies; and a pleasantry which moved the audience to anything more than a grave smile was reprobated as low. It is not strange, therefore, that the very best scene in *The Good-Natured Man* — that in which Miss Richland finds her lover attended by the bailiff and the bailiff's follower in full court-dress — should have been mercilessly hissed, and should have been omitted after the first night.

In 1770 appeared *The Deserted Village*. In mere diction and versification, this celebrated poem is fully equal, perhaps superior, to *The Traveller*; and it is generally preferred to *The Traveller* by that large class of readers who think, with Bayes in *The Rehearsal*, that the only use of a plan is to bring in fine things. More discerning judges, however, while they admire the beauty of the details, are shocked by one unpardonable fault which pervades the whole. The fault which we mean is not that theory about wealth and luxury which has so often been censured by political economists. The theory is indeed false; but the poem, considered merely as a poem, is not necessarily the worse on that account. The finest poem in the Latin language — indeed, the finest didactic poem in any language — was written in defense of the silliest and meanest of all systems of natural and moral philosophy. A poet may easily be pardoned for reasoning ill, but he cannot be pardoned for describing ill; for observing the world in which he lives so carelessly that his portraits bear no resemblance to the originals; for exhibiting as copies from real life

monstrous combinations of things which never were, and never could be, found together. What would be thought of a painter who should mix August and January in one landscape — who should introduce a frozen river into a harvest scene? Would it be a sufficient defense of such a picture to say that every part was exquisitely colored; that the green hedges, the apple trees loaded with fruit, the wagons reeling under the yellow sheaves, and the sunburnt reapers wiping their foreheads, were very fine; and that the ice and the boys sliding were also very fine? To such a picture *The Deserted Village* bears a great resemblance. It is made up of incongruous parts. The village in its happy days is a true English village. The village in its decay is an Irish village. The felicity and the misery which Goldsmith has brought close together belong to two different countries, and to two different stages in the progress of society. He had assuredly never seen in his native island such a rural paradise, such a seat of plenty, content, and tranquillity, as his Auburn. He had assuredly never seen in England all the inhabitants of such a paradise turned out of their homes in one day, and forced to emigrate in a body to America. The hamlet he had probably seen in Kent; the ejection he had probably seen in Munster; but by joining the two, he has produced something which never was and never will be seen in any part of the world.

In 1773 Goldsmith tried his chance at Covent Garden with a second play, *She Stoops to Conquer*. The manager was not without great difficulty induced to bring this piece out. The sentimental comedy still reigned, and Goldsmith's comedies were not sentimental. *The Good-Natured Man* had been too funny to succeed; yet the mirth of *The Good-Natured Man* was

sober when compared with the rich drollery of *She Stoops to Conquer*, which is, in truth, an incomparable farce in five acts. On this occasion, however, genius triumphed. Pit, boxes, and galleries were in a constant roar of laughter. If any bigoted admirer of Kelly and Cumberland ventured to hiss or groan, he was speedily silenced by a general cry of "Turn him out!" or "Throw him over!" Two generations have since confirmed the verdict which was pronounced on that night.

While Goldsmith was writing *The Deserted Village* and *She Stoops to Conquer*, he was employed on works of a very different kind — works from which he derived little reputation, but much profit. He compiled for the use of schools a *History of Rome*, by which he made three hundred pounds; a *History of England* by which he made six hundred pounds; a *History of Greece*, for which he received two hundred and fifty pounds; a *Natural History*, for which the booksellers covenanted to pay him eight hundred guineas. These works he produced without any elaborate research, by merely selecting, abridging, and translating into his own clear, pure, and flowing language what he found in books well known to the world, but too bulky or too dry for boys and girls. He committed some strange blunders, for he knew nothing with accuracy. Thus, in his *History of England*, he tells us that Naseby is in Yorkshire; nor did he correct this mistake when the book was reprinted. He was very nearly hoaxed into putting into the *History of Greece* an account of a battle between Alexander the Great and Montezuma. In his *Animated Nature* he relates, with faith and with perfect gravity, all the most absurd lies which he could find in books of travels about gigantic Patagonians, monkeys that preach sermons, nightingales that repeat long conversations. "If he can

tell a horse from a cow," says Johnson, "that is the extent of his knowledge of zoölogy." How little Goldsmith was qualified to write about the physical sciences is sufficiently proved by two anecdotes. He on one occasion denied that the sun is longer in the northern than in the southern signs. It was vain to cite the authority of Maupertuis. "Maupertuis!" he cried; "I understand those matters better than Maupertuis." On another occasion he, in defiance of the evidence of his own senses, maintained obstinately, and even angrily, that he chewed his dinner by moving his upper jaw.

Yet, ignorant as Goldsmith was, few writers have done more to make the first steps in the laborious road to knowledge easy and pleasant. His compilations are widely distinguished from the compilations of ordinary book-makers. He was a great, perhaps an unequalled, master of the arts of selection and condensation. In these respects his histories of Rome and of England, and still more his own abridgments of these histories, well deserve to be studied. In general nothing is less attractive than an epitome, but the epitomes of Goldsmith, even when most concise, are always amusing; and to read them is considered by intelligent children, not as a task, but as a pleasure.

Goldsmith might now be considered as a prosperous man. He had the means of living in comfort, and even in what, to one who had so often slept in barns and on bulks, must have been luxury. His fame was great, and was constantly rising. He lived in what was intellectually far the best society of the kingdom — in a society in which no talent or accomplishment was wanting, and in which the art of conversation was cultivated with splendid success. There probably were never four

talkers more admirable in four different ways than Johnson, Burke, Beauclerk, and Garrick; and Goldsmith was on terms of intimacy with all the four. He aspired to share their colloquial renown, but never was ambition more unfortunate. It may seem strange that a man who wrote with so much perspicuity, vivacity, and grace should have been, whenever he took a part in conversation, an empty, noisy, blundering rattle. But on this point the evidence is overwhelming. So extraordinary was the contrast between Goldsmith's published works and the silly things which he said, that Horace Walpole described him as an inspired idiot. "Noll," said Garrick, "wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll." Chamier declared that it was hard exercise of faith to believe that so foolish a chatterer could have really written *The Traveller*. Even Boswell could say, with contemptuous compassion, that he liked very well to hear honest Goldsmith run on. "Yes, sir," said Johnson, "but he should not like to hear himself." Minds differ as rivers differ. There are transparent and sparkling rivers from which it is delightful to drink as they flow; to such rivers the minds of such men as Burke and Johnson may be compared. But there are rivers of which the water when first drawn is turbid and noisome, but becomes pellucid as crystal and delicious to the taste if it be suffered to stand till it has deposited a sediment; and such a river is a type of the mind of Goldsmith. His first thoughts on every subject were confused even to absurdity, but they required only a little time to work themselves clear. When he wrote, they had that time, and therefore his readers pronounced him a man of genius; but when he talked he talked nonsense, and made himself the laughing-stock of his hearers. He was painfully sensible of his inferiority in

conversation; he felt every failure keenly; yet he had not sufficient judgment and self-command to hold his tongue. His animal spirits and vanity were always impelling him to try to do the one thing which he could not do. After every attempt, he felt that he had exposed himself, and writhed with shame and vexation; yet the next moment he began again.

His associates seem to have regarded him with kindness, which, in spite of their admiration of his writings, was not unmixed with contempt. In truth, there was in his character much to love, but very little to respect. His heart was soft, even to weakness; he was so generous that he quite forgot to be just; he forgave injuries so readily that he might be said to invite them; and was so liberal to beggars that he had nothing left for his tailor and his butcher. He was vain, sensual, frivolous, profuse, improvident. One vice of a darker shade was imputed to him, envy. But there is not the least reason to believe that this bad passion, though it sometimes made him wince and utter fretful exclamations, ever impelled him to injure by wicked arts the reputation of any of his rivals. The truth probably is, that he was not more envious, but merely less prudent, than his neighbors. His heart was on his lips. All those small jealousies which are but too common among men of letters, but which a man of letters who is also a man of the world does his best to conceal, Goldsmith avowed with the simplicity of a child. When he was envious, instead of affecting indifference, instead of damning with faint praise, instead of doing injuries slyly and in the dark, he told everybody that he was envious. "Do not, pray do not, talk of Johnson in such terms," he said to Boswell; "you harrow up my very soul." George Steevens and Cumberland were men far too

cunning to say such a thing. They would have echoed the praises of the man whom they envied, and then have sent to the newspapers anonymous libels upon him. Both what was good and what was bad in Goldsmith's character was to his associates a perfect security that he would never commit such villany. He was neither ill-natured enough, nor long-headed enough, to be guilty of any malicious act which required contrivance and disguise.

Goldsmith has sometimes been represented as a man of genius, cruelly treated by the world, and doomed to struggle with difficulties which at last broke his heart. But no representation can be more remote from the truth. He did, indeed, go through much sharp misery before he had done anything considerable in literature. But after his name had appeared on the title-page of *The Traveller*, he had none but himself to blame for his distresses. His average income during the last seven years of his life certainly exceeded four hundred pounds a year, and four hundred pounds a year ranked among the incomes of that day at least as high as eight hundred pounds a year would rank at present. A single man living in the Temple with four hundred pounds a year might then be called opulent. Not one in ten of the younger gentlemen of good families who were studying the law there had so much. But all the wealth which Lord Clive had brought from Bengal, and Sir Lawrence Dundas from Germany, joined together, would not have sufficed for Goldsmith. He spent twice as much as he had. He wore fine clothes, gave dinners of several courses, paid court to venal beauties. He had also, it should be remembered to the honor of his heart though not of his head, a guinea, or five, or ten, according to the state of his purse, ready for any tale of distress, true or

false. But it was not in dress or feasting, in promiscuous amours or promiscuous charities, that his chief expense lay. He had been from boyhood a gambler, and at once the most sanguine and the most unskillful of gamblers. For a time he put off the day of inevitable ruin by temporary expedients. He obtained advances from booksellers by promising to execute works which he never began. But at length this source of supply failed. He owed more than two thousand pounds, and he saw no hope of extrication from his embarrassments. His spirits and health gave way. He was attacked by a nervous fever, which he thought himself competent to treat. It would have been happy for him if his medical skill had been appreciated as justly by himself as by others. Notwithstanding the degree which he pretended to have received at Padua, he could procure no patients. "I do not practice," he once said; "I make it a rule to prescribe only for my friends." "Pray, dear Doctor," said Beauclerk, "alter your rule, and prescribe only for your enemies." Goldsmith now, in spite of this excellent advice, prescribed for himself. The remedy aggravated the malady. The sick man was induced to call in real physicians, and they at one time imagined that they had cured the disease. Still his weakness and restlessness continued. He could get no sleep; he could take no food. "You are worse," said one of his medical attendants, "than you should be from the degree of fever which you have. Is your mind at ease?" "No, it is not," were the last recorded words of Oliver Goldsmith. He died on the 3d of April, 1774, in his forty-sixth year. He was laid in the churchyard of the Temple; but the spot was not marked by any inscription, and is now forgotten. The coffin was followed by Burke and Reynolds. Both these great men were

sincere mourners. Burke, when he heard of Goldsmith's death, had burst into a flood of tears. Reynolds had been so much moved by the news that he had flung aside his brush and palette for the day.

A short time after Goldsmith's death, a little poem appeared, which will, as long as our language lasts, associate the names of his two illustrious friends with his own. It has already been mentioned that he sometimes felt keenly the sarcasm which his wild, blundering talk brought upon him. He was, not long before his last illness, provoked into retaliating. He wisely betook himself to his pen, and at that weapon he proved himself a match for all his assailants together. Within a small compass he drew with a singularly easy and vigorous pencil the characters of nine or ten of his intimate associates. Though this little work did not receive his last touches, it must always be regarded as a masterpiece. It is impossible, however, not to wish that four or five likenesses which have no interest for posterity were wanting to that noble gallery, and that their places were supplied by sketches of Johnson and Gibbon as happy and vivid as the sketches of Burke and Garrick.

Some of Goldsmith's friends and admirers honored him with a cenotaph in Westminster Abbey. Nollekens was the sculptor, and Johnson wrote the inscription. It is much to be lamented that Johnson did not leave to posterity a more durable and a more valuable memorial of his friend. A life of Goldsmith would have been an inestimable addition to the *Lives of the Poets*. No man appreciated Goldsmith's writings more justly than Johnson; no man was better acquainted with Goldsmith's character and habits; and no man was more competent to delineate with truth and spirit the

peculiarities of a mind in which great powers were found in company with great weaknesses. But the list of poets to whose works Johnson was requested by the booksellers to furnish prefaces ended with Lyttelton, who died in 1773. The line seems to have been drawn expressly for the purpose of excluding the person whose portrait would have most fitly closed the series. Goldsmith, however, has been fortunate in his biographers. Within a few years his life has been written by Mr. Prior, by Mr. Washington Irving, and by Mr. Forster. The diligence of Mr. Prior deserves great praise; the style of Mr. Washington Irving is always pleasing; but the highest place must in justice be assigned to the eminently interesting work of Mr. Forster.

NOTES

SAMUEL JOHNSON

THE *Essay on Johnson* first appeared in the eighth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and is still to be found there. The editors of the new edition were wise in retaining what is not only in all probability the best of Macaulay's essays, but also one of the finest biographical sketches in any language. Macaulay knew his subject and sympathized with the great doctor, yet his limited space prevented his becoming too discursive, and his years of practice enabled him to give to his style precision and strength. Consequently, both in substance and in form this miniature biography represents Macaulay at his best.

The present edition has had in mind the modern student, and has emphasized points of the greatest profit and interest for classroom discussion. The notes and selections from Boswell which are appended aid in the elucidation of the text, and in addition, a map of eighteenth-century London has been provided on page vi which ought to bring about a closer understanding of Johnson's surroundings.

PAGE

I. *Lichfield*: A town about one hundred miles north of London in Staffordshire. Addison and Garrick both attended Lichfield Grammar School.

Bookseller: In England the publishing and the selling of books are combined.

Taking the oath: An oath of allegiance required of clergymen and office-holders after 1688.

Sovereigns in possession: William and Mary.

Jacobite: A member of the party that supported James II and later sought the restoration of the Stuarts.

Of parts: Of mental endowments. Boswell says of Johnson's memory: "Of the power of his memory, for which he was all his life eminent to a degree almost incredible, the

PAGE

following early instance was told me in his presence at Lichfield, in 1776, by his step-daughter, Mrs. Lucy Porter, as related to her by his mother. When he was a child in petticoats, and had learnt to read, Mrs. Johnson one morning put the common prayer-book into his hands, pointed to the collect for the day, and said, 'Sam, you must get this by heart.' She went upstairs, leaving him to study it: but by the time she had reached the second floor, she heard him following her. 'What's the matter?' said she. 'I can say it,' he replied; and repeated it distinctly, though he could not have read it more than twice."

1. *The royal touch*: From the time of Edward the Confessor in the eleventh century to Johnson's day, there existed in England a belief that scrofula, then called "king's evil," could be cured by the touch of the sovereign. Shakespeare alludes to this custom in *Macbeth*, Act IV, Scene III.
2. *Attic*: Pertaining to Athens, the intellectual center of Greece, which was situated in the district of Attica.
Augustan delicacy of taste: The Augustan Age was the most illustrious in Roman literature, hence the term is applied to any period of literary excellence (here age of Queen Anne) characterized by refinement of taste.
Sixth form of Eton: In the English public schools there are generally six classes, known as forms, the sixth form being the highest. Eton, Harrow, Rugby, and Westminster are among the most famous of these schools.
Restorers of learning: The leaders of the Renaissance, Petrarch, Erasmus, Sir Thomas More, Colet, etc.
3. *At either University*: There were then but two universities in England — Oxford and Cambridge.
Pembroke College: One of the numerous independent colleges forming together the university of Oxford.
Society: An English college is an endowed and incorporated association of students.
Desultory but not unprofitable study: "He used to mention one curious instance of his casual reading, when but a boy. Having imagined that his brother had hid some apples behind a large folio upon an upper shelf in his

PAGE

father's shop, he climbed up to search for them. There were no apples; but the large folio proved to be Petrarch, whom he had seen mentioned in some preface, as one of the restorers of learning. His curiosity having been thus excited, he sat down with avidity, and read a great part of the book." BOSWELL.

Macrobius: An obscure Roman grammarian of the fifth century, A.D.

4. *Gentleman commoner*: One paying all fees, not dependent on the college funds for support.

Pope's Messiah: A Biblical poem imitating the manner of Virgil.

Bachelor of Arts: Three years' residence was required for this degree, the first given to a student.

5. *His grimaces . . . omission*: "He had another particularity, of which none of his friends ever ventured to ask an explanation. It appeared to me some superstitious habit, which he had contracted early, and from which he had never called upon his reason to disentangle him. This was his anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage, by a certain number of steps from a certain point, or at least so as that either his right or his left foot (I am not certain which) should constantly make the first actual movement when he came close to the door or passage. Thus I conjecture: for I have, upon innumerable occasions, observed him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with a deep earnestness; and when he had neglected or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and, having gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion." BOSWELL.

6. *Henry Hervey*: Son of the Earl of Bristol and brother of Lord John Hervey.

Gilbert Walmesley: A well-known English lawyer, noted for his scholarly attainments. In Johnson's youth he and Garrick often dined with Walmesley.

Usher: An assistant master in a school in which Latin and Greek were the chief studies. The school was that of Market Bosworth. Johnson became usher in July, 1732.

PAGE

6. *Latin book about Abyssinia*: This was not a Latin book, but a French translation of a work by Lobo (1593-1678), a Portuguese Jesuit.

Subscription: Money paid in advance for the purchase of a proposed book.

Politician: One of the most brilliant scholars in Italy in the fifteenth century.

7. *Mrs. Elizabeth Porter*: In Macaulay's description of Mrs. Porter we have one striking illustration of exaggeration for dramatic effect.

Queensberrys and Lepels: The aristocracy; the names of two families of high birth. Macaulay always preferred the concrete term to the abstract one. Mary Lepel (1700-1768), who married Lord John Hervey, author of the *Memoirs of the Court of George II*, and Catherine Hyde (died 1777), afterwards Duchess of Queensberry, were noted beauties of the period and friends of Pope and Gay.

David Garrick: A celebrated actor of Johnson's time, "Both of them [Garrick and Johnson] used to talk pleasantly of this their first journey to London. Garrick, evidently meaning to embellish a little, said one day in my hearing, 'we rode and tied.' And the Bishop of Killaloe (Dr. Barnard) informed me, that at another time, when Johnson and Garrick were dining together in a pretty large company, Johnson humorously ascertaining the chronology of something, expressed himself thus: 'That was the year when I came to London with twopence halfpenny in my pocket.' Garrick overhearing him, exclaimed, 'Eh? what do you say? with twopence halfpenny in your pocket?' — Johnson: 'Why yes; when I came with twopence halfpenny in my pocket, and thou, Davy, with three halfpence in thine.'" BOSWELL.

8. *Irene*: Johnson's only drama — produced by Garrick, later, but never a success.

The preceding generation: The reigns of William III and of Anne.

Secretary of State: With regard to literary men who rose in politics, remember that Steele was a member of Parliament, Prior an ambassador, and Addison a Secretary of State.

PAGE

8. *Several writers*: Scott, Byron, Macaulay, Dickens, and Thackeray, for example.
Pope: Alexander Pope (1688-1744), the dictator of all things literary between the times of Dryden and Johnson.
Thomson: James Thomson (1700-1784), a Scottish poet and one of the pioneers of the new romantic school. His best-known poems, besides *The Seasons*, are *Rule Britannia* and *The Castle of Indolence*.
9. *Fielding*: Henry Fielding (1707-1754), a great English novelist of the eighteenth century.
Pasquin: A popular burlesque criticizing the political corruption of the Walpole era.
The Beggar's Opera: A burlesque satire written in 1728 by John Gay.
Porter's knot: A pad for supporting burdens worn on the head.
Drury Lane: A famous street near Covent Garden in the heart of London.
10. *Ordinaries*: Eating-houses, where a fixed rate is charged for meals.
Alamode: *à la mode*, beef larded with spices, vegetables, wine, etc.
Harleian Library: A magnificent collection of books and manuscripts formed by Robert Harley, afterward Earl of Oxford. The manuscripts, of the utmost value, are now in the British Museum. Osborne, the bookseller, who had purchased the Harleian Library, employed Dr. Johnson to prepare a catalogue for it. Boswell says of the story alluded to here: "It has been confidently related with many embellishments, that Johnson one day knocked Osborne down in his shop with a folio, and put his foot upon his neck. The simple truth I had from Johnson himself. 'Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him, but it was not in his shop, it was in my own chamber.'"
- Cave*: Edward Cave (1691-1754), under the name of Sylvanus Urban, founded, in 1731, *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Johnson wrote a good Latin ode to him, and a short sketch of him.
Parliamentary intelligence . . . Senate of Lilliput: Lilliput

PAGE

and the names following were taken from Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, in which the author satirizes the England of his day. In Johnson's time the House of Commons was very strict about publicity — in fact the reporting of speeches and debates did not become authorized until 1771.

11. *Capulets, Montagues*: Rival families in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Roman circus: The drivers in the Roman circus wore liveries — white, red, green, and blue — and the populace took sides according to colors.

Whig and Tory: The Whigs were a political party which grew up in England in the seventeenth century, in the reigns of Charles I and II during the great contests respecting the royal privileges and the rights of the people. Those who supported the king in his high claim were called Tories, and the advocates of popular rights of parliamentary power over the crown, and of toleration to Dissenters were, after 1679, called Whigs. The names were later changed — Tory to Conservative; Whig to Liberal.

Sacheverell: The Rev. Dr. Henry Sacheverell (1672–1724), a High Churchman, who, in 1709, preached two sermons against the Whigs. He was impeached, tried by the Peers, and found guilty, with the result that he became a hero with the Tories, and had not a little to do with the Whig downfall in the next election.

Jacobitical: Supporters of the Royalist party were called Jacobites. The term Jacobite (from the Latin Jacobus, James) was applied to the party in Great Britain, which, after the Revolution of 1688, supported the dethroned James II and the Stuarts. It was more numerous in Scotland than in England.

Tom Tempest: An extreme Jacobite in Johnson's *Idler*, No. 10.

12. *Laud*: William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, strong supporter of Charles I.

Art and Genius:

Nor deem, when Learning her last prize bestows,
The glitt'ring eminence exempt from woes;

PAGE

See, when the vulgar 'scape, despised or awed,
 Rebellion's vengeful talons seize on Laud.
 From meaner minds though smaller fines content,
 The plunder'd palace, or sequester'd tent;
 Mark'd out by dangerous parts, he meets the shock
 And fatal Learning leads him to the block:
 Around his tomb let Art and Genius weep,
 But hear his death, ye blockheads, hear and sleep.

The Vanity of Human Wishes.

12. *Hampden*: John Hampden (1594-1643), the famous Puritan statesman, who resisted the ship-money tax, and was killed in a skirmish with the Royalists.

Ship money: A tax levied upon seaports in time of war for their defense. Charles levied it in time of peace.

Falkland, Clarendon: Supporters of Charles I, of much finer caliber than many.

Roundheads: A name applied by the Royalists to the Puritans because they wore their hair cut short as a protest against the foppery of the Cavaliers.

Under a government the mildest: Witness how the prejudices of both Macaulay, the Whig, and Johnson, the Tory, are evident in this statement.

Those golden days: Daniel Defoe, in 1703, was punished severely for publishing anonymously a criticism of certain acts of Parliament.

Dissenters, stockjobbers: Dissenters were opposed to the church; stockjobbers to the landed interests; the excise was favored by Walpole; the army was due to William III; limiting the duration of Parliament (to seven years) was a Whig measure; connections with foreign countries, especially with Holland, formed a part of Whig policy.

Great Rebellion: The Royalist name for the Puritan Revolution.

13. *Member of the opposition*: Member of the Tory party — the party out of power at the time.

Juvenal: A great Roman satirical poet who lived during the first century, A.D. Johnson imitated Juvenal's *Third Satire* in his poem *London*:

By numbers here from shame or censure free,
 All crimes are safe but hated poverty.

PAGE

This, only this, the rigid law pursues,
 This, only this, provokes the snarling Muse.
 The sober trader at a tatter'd cloak
 Wakes from his dream and labours for a joke;
 With brisker air the silken courtiers gaze
 And turn the varied taunt a thousand ways.

13. *Horace*: One of the greatest Latin poets — a satirist.
14. *The most eminent writer of the generation . . . going out*:
 Alexander Pope, literary dictator, died in 1744.
Boyse: Samuel Boyse (1708–1749), an Irish poet, always poor and now forgotten.
Hoole: Uncle of John Hoole, the translator of Tasso and Ariosto, who was also a friend of Johnson.
George Psalmanazar (1679–1763): Pretended to be a native of Formosa and wrote an account of that island which deceived a great many people. He was born in France, but kept his real name concealed.
Richard Savage (1697–1743): An interesting figure in Johnson's circle, one of the most congenial of Johnson's young companions. Boswell relates an interesting anecdote: "It is melancholy to reflect, that Johnson and Savage were sometimes in such extreme indigence, that they could not pay for lodging; so that they have wandered together whole nights in the streets. Yet Johnson told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that one night in particular, when Savage and he walked round Saint James's Square for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation; but in high spirits and brimful of patriotism, traversed the square for several hours, inveighed against the minister, and 'resolved they would *stand by their country*.'" *Feasted among blue ribbands*, etc.: Feasted with Knights of the Garter, in one of the most aristocratic quarters of London.
Newgate: A famous London prison.
15. *Piazza of Covent Garden*: A sort of arcade or covered passage surrounding the open place, Covent Garden.
Grub Street: A street "much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called *grubstreet*." JOHNSON'S *Dictionary*.

PAGE

15. *The Life of Savage*: "Sir Joshua Reynolds told me, that upon his return from Italy he met with it [the *Life of Savage*] in Devonshire, knowing nothing of its author, and began to read it while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly, that, not being able to lay down the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move, he found his arm totally benumbed. The rapidity with which this work was composed is a wonderful circumstance. Johnson has been heard to say, 'I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the *Life of Savage* at a sitting; but then I sat up all night.'" BOSWELL.
16. *Warburton*: William Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, an eminent critic and editor, a friend of Johnson. *Dictionary*: Before Johnson's time no dictionary worthy of the name had appeared. The publication of Johnson's *Dictionary* was, therefore, an epoch-making event. "While the *Dictionary* was going forward, Johnson lived part of the time in Holborn, part in Gough Square, Fleet Street; and he had an upper room fitted up like a counting-house for the purpose, in which he gave to the copyists their several tasks. The words partly taken from other dictionaries, and partly supplied by himself, having been first written down with spaces left between them, he delivered in writing their etymologies, definitions, and various significations. The authorities were copied from the books themselves, in which he had marked the passages with a black-lead pencil, the traces of which could easily be effaced. I have seen several of them, in which that trouble had not been taken; so that they were just as when used by the copyists. It is remarkable, that he was so attentive in the choice of the passages in which words were authorised, that one may read page after page of his *Dictionary* with improvement and pleasure." BOSWELL. *Earl of Chesterfield*: The Earl of Chesterfield (Philip Dormer Stanhope, 1694-1773) is chiefly renowned as a man of fashion, and as an author of a series of *Letters* to his son which is still a classic manual of conduct. Johnson remarked of this famous book that it taught the morals of a courtesan and the manners of a dancing-master.

PAGE

Chesterfield was an accomplished diplomat, and foresaw the coming of the French Revolution.

16. *Patron*: Down to the time of Pope and later, the patron, a nobleman or other distinguished personage who would pay for the honor of a dedication, was necessary to the author. The growth of a reading public has relieved authors from this necessity.
17. *Tenth Satire of Juvenal*: The theme of Juvenal's *Tenth Satire* was itself the vanity of human wishes:

"The statues, tumbled down,
Are dragged by hooting thousands through the town;
The brazen cars, torn rudely from the yoke,
And, with the blameless steeds, to shivers broke —
Then roar the flames! the sooty artist blows,
And all Sejanus in the furnace glows.

• • • • •
"Crown all your doors with bay, triumphant bay!
Sacred to Jove, the milk-white victim slay,
For lo! where great Sejanus by the throng,
A joyful spectacle is dragged along."

Translation by Gifford.

From Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*:

In full-blown dignity, see Wolsey stand
• • • • •

Where'er he turns, he meets a stranger's eye,
His suppliants scorn him, and his followers fly;
Now drops at once the pride of awful state,
The golden canopy, the glittering plate,
The regal palace, the luxurious board,
The liveried army and the menial lord.
With age, with cares, with maladies oppress'd,
He seeks the refuge of monastic rest.
Grief aids disease, remember'd folly stings,
And his last sighs reproach the faith of kings.

Sejanus: Lucius Ælius Sejanus, minister of the Emperor Tiberius.

Hannibal: A great general of the Carthaginians in the Second Punic War, 218–201 B.C.

Charles: Charles XII of Sweden, a famous general (1697–1718).

PAGE

17. *Goodman's Fields*: A London theater, erected in 1729 and torn down in 1746. Garrick performed some of his most successful plays here.
18. *Drury Lane Theatre*: London's most famous playhouse, erected in 1663 on Russell Street, near Drury Lane.
Galled by . . . one morose cynic: Johnson.
The two Lichfield men: Addison, Johnson, and Garrick were all educated, in part, at the Free Grammar School at Lichfield.
19. *The Tatler, The Spectator*: Short-lived periodicals founded by Richard Steele, between 1709-1712, to which he and Joseph Addison contributed many essays.
The Rambler: A periodical similar in style to *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.
Richardson: Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), an English novelist who wrote No. 97 of *The Rambler*.
Young: Edward Young (1681-1765), a poet.
Hartley: David Hartley, a physician and philosopher.
Dodington: George Bubb Dodington (Lord Melcombe, 1691-1762), a patron of letters.
20. *Leicester House*: Then the residence of the Prince of Wales.
Sir Roger . . . Abbey: Characters and scenes from *The Spectator*.
21. *Squire Bluster . . . Ajut*: Characters and incidents in *The Rambler*.
The Gunnings: Elizabeth and Maria Gunning were famous beauties, immortalized by the paintings of Sir Joshua Reynolds.
Lady Mary: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), known to Pope and his set as "Lady Mary," was known for her wit and her talents as a letter writer. She originated the famous characterization of Pope as "the wicked wasp of Twickenham."
22. *In a letter*:

February 7, 1755.

To the right honorable the Earl of Chesterfield

MY LORD,

I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of the *World*, that two papers in which my dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished,

PAGE

is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*; — that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well-pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long awakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation. My Lord, your lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

22. *Horne Tooke*: John Horne Tooke (1736–1812), famous as a politician, philologist, and conversationalist. The passage over which he wept is the concluding paragraph of

the Preface: "Though no book was ever spared out of tenderness to the author, and the world is little solicitous to know whence proceeded the faults of that which it condemns; yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it that the English Dictionary was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow: and it may repress the triumph of malignant criticism to observe, that if our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of ancient tongues, now immutably fixed, and comprised in a few volumes, be yet, after the toil of successive ages, inadequate and delusive; if the aggregated knowledge, and coöperating diligence of the Italian academicians, did not secure them from the censure of Beni; if the embodied critics of France, when fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its economy, and give their second edition another form, I may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which, if I could obtain, in this gloom of solitude, what could it avail me? I have protracted my work until most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds: I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise."

23. *The definitions*: Some of the definitions are famous for their humor; in others Johnson showed his political bias, e.g., "Lexicographer, a harmless drudge"; and "Excise, a hateful tax." A few of his definitions must be admitted to be erroneous. His Preface announces that he was aware that there might be many such in so immense a work; nor was he at all disconcerted when an instance was pointed out to him. A lady once asked him how he came to define "Pastern" as the knee of a horse. Instead of making an elaborate defense, as she expected, he at once answered, "Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance."
- Junius and Skinner*: Francis Junius (1589-1677), and Stephen Skinner (1623-1677) were scholars who studied

PAGE

the Teutonic languages at a time when little was known of them.

24. *Jenyns*: Soames Jenyns (1704-1787), a small poet, member of Parliament, and author of the book, *Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*, the style of which was much admired.

The Idler: "Many of these excellent essays were written as hastily as an ordinary letter. Mr. Langton remembers Johnson, when on a visit to Oxford, asking him one evening how long it was till the post went out; and on being told about half an hour, he exclaimed, 'Then we shall do very well.' He upon this instantly sat down and finished an *Idler*, which it was necessary should be in London the next day. Mr. Langton having signified a wish to read it, 'Sir (said he) you shall not do more than I have done myself.' He then folded it up and sent it off." BOSWELL.

Lydia Languish: A well-known character in Sheridan's *Rivals*.

25. *Rasselas, Imlac, Nekayah, Pekuah*: Characters in Johnson's book, *Rasselas or the Prince of Abyssinia*.

Newton: Sir Isaac Newton was a Cambridge man. That university has been famous for mathematics, hence the use of "even."

Bruce: James Bruce (1730-1794), a Scotch explorer, the most celebrated African traveler before Livingston. His travels were not published until after Johnson had written *Rasselas*.

Burke: Edmund Burke, a noted orator, famous for his *Speech on Conciliation with America*: a member of Johnson's circle.

Mrs. Lennox: A poet and a novelist, friend of Dr. Johnson.

Mrs. Sheridan: Mother of the playwright, Richard Brinsley Sheridan; a novelist and friend of Johnson.

26. *Hector . . . Delphi*: Hector, the hero of the Trojan War, lived in the twelfth century B.C. Aristotle, a great Greek philosopher, lived from 384-322 B.C. Julio Romano was an Italian painter and architect of the sixteenth century. The Oracle of Delphi ceased to exist in the

PAGE

fourth century. These anachronisms are to be found in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and *A Winter's Tale*.

26. *Lord Privy Seal*: The keeper of the seal affixed to less important documents and to grants that are afterwards to pass under the great seal, kept by the Lord Chancellor. The keeper referred to was Lord Gower, whom Johnson regarded as a renegade because he gave up the Jacobite party.

George III had ascended the throne: In 1760.

The city: The city of London.

27. *Oxford was becoming loyal*: Oxford had clung to the Stuarts as long as possible. Macaulay means here that the university was now professing loyalty to the House of Hanover.

Cavendishes . . . Wyndhams: All the Whigs, even those of great families like the Cavendishes and Bentincks that had helped to place his family on the throne, George III now began forcing out of office. Tory families, such as the Somersets and Wyndhams, hastened to his support.

Lord Bute: John Stuart, Earl of Bute, the great Whig Prime Minister.

Pension: In England the pension is a reward given for civil service and also for any distinctive service, for instance, literary achievement.

Sheriff's officer: That is, the officer who had so often attached Johnson's goods or his person to secure payment for debts. About this time Johnson declared to a friend: "No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money."

28. *Churchill*: Charles Churchill (1731-1764), a satirist of note.

Cock Lane ghost: In 1762 a young girl living in Cock Lane pretended to have communication with the spirit world. The affair attracted the attention of many famous men, among them Johnson, who investigated the affair and aided, according to Boswell, in revealing the deception.

29. *Polonius*: Father of Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Wilhelm Meister: The hero of Goethe's famous novel, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. It contains an interpretation of Hamlet's character.

Ben: Ben Jonson (1573-1637), critic, poet, dramatist, greatest of Shakespeare's contemporaries.

PAGE

29. *Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles*: Three great tragedians of ancient Greece.

Massinger . . . Fletcher: All dramatists and, with the exception of Marlowe, Shakespeare's successors.

30. *Royal Academy*: Royal Academy of Arts, founded in 1768 by George III, Sir Joshua Reynolds being its first president. Johnson was made Professor in Ancient Literature — an honor without salary.

By the King with an interview: "In February, 1767, there happened one of the most remarkable incidents of Johnson's life, which gratified his monarchical enthusiasm, and which he loved to relate with all its circumstances, when requested by his friends. This was his being honored by a private conversation with his Majesty, in the library at the Queen's house. . . . His Majesty enquired if he was then writing anything. He answered he was not, for he had pretty well told the world what he knew, and must now read to acquire knowledge. The King, as it would seem with a view to urge him to rely on his own stores as an original writer, and to continue his labours, then said, 'I do not think you borrow much from anybody.' . . . His Majesty expressed a desire to have the literary biography of this country ably executed, and proposed to Dr. Johnson to undertake it. Johnson signified his readiness to comply with his Majesty's wishes." BOSWELL.

31. *A club*: The club met at the Turk's Head, Soho, and after Garrick's death was called the Literary Club. Macaulay gives the names of all the original members save those of Burke's father-in-law, Dr. Nugent, Mr. Anthony Chamber, and Sir John Hawkins (who wrote a life of Johnson). The club has been continued and Macaulay in Trevelyan's *Life and Letters* gives a pleasant account of a meeting:

"One night when Beauclerk and Langton had supped at a tavern in London, and sat till about three in the morning, it came into their heads to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the door of his chambers in the Temple, till at last he appeared in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head, in

PAGE

stead of a nightcap, and a poker in his hand, imagining, probably, that some ruffians were coming to attack him. When he discovered who they were, and was told their errand, he smiled, and with great good humour agreed to their proposal: 'What, is it you, you dogs! I'll have a frisk with you.' He was soon drest, and they sallied forth together into Covent-Garden, where the green-grocers and fruiterers were beginning to arrange their hampers, just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them; but the honest gardeners stared so at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw that his services were not relished. They then repaired to one of the neighbouring taverns, and made a bowl of that liquor called *Bishop*, which Johnson had always liked; while in joyous contempt of sleep, from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines,

'Short, O short then be thy reign,
And give us to the world again.'

They did not stay long, but walked down to the Thames, took a boat and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauclerk and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the day: but Langton deserted them, being engaged to breakfast with some young ladies. Johnson scolded him for 'leaving his social friends to go and sit with a set of wretched *unidea'd* girls.' Garrick being told of this ramble, said to him smartly, 'I heard of your frolic t'other night. You'll be in the *Chronicle*.' Upon which Johnson afterwards observed, '*He durst not do such a thing. His wife would not let him!*'" BOSWELL.

31. *Trunk-maker and the pastry cook*: These men used large quantities of paper in their callings and as paper was then far more expensive than at present, it was customary for them to buy old books and tear them up to be used in separate sheets.
32. *Johnson's Club*: Boswell writes of his difficulty in obtaining election to the Club: "The gentlemen went away to their club, and I was left at Beauclerk's till the fate of my election should be announced to me.

PAGE

I sat in a state of anxiety which even the charming conversation of Lady Di Beauclerk could not entirely dissipate. In a short time I received the agreeable intelligence that I was chosen. I hastened to the place of meeting, and was introduced to such a society as can seldom be found. Mr. Edmund Burke, whom I then saw for the first time and whose splendid talents had long made me ardently wish for his acquaintance; Dr. Nugent, Mr. Garrick, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. (afterwards Sir William) Jones, and the company with whom I had dined. Upon my entrance Johnson placed himself behind a chair, on which he leaned as on a desk or pulpit, and with humorous formality gave me a charge, pointing out the conduct expected from me as a good member of this club." BOSWELL.

32. *James Boswell* (1740-1795): The famous biographer of Johnson.

33. *Wilkes*: John Wilkes (1727-1797), perhaps the most conspicuous figure of the latter part of the eighteenth century. Politician, wit, scholar, and rake, he was the most hideous and captivating man of his time. He obtained from Parliament freedom of the press and freedom of election. *The Bill of Rights Society* was formed to aid him in his struggle.

Whitefield: George Whitefield (1714-1770), one of the greatest of the Methodist revivalists.

During twenty years: James Boswell first met Johnson in 1763.

34. *The Thrales*: Mrs. Thrale was Hester Lynch Salisbury (1741-1821). She married Thrale in 1763, and after his death, in 1781, was fascinated by Gabriel Piozzi, an Italian music teacher, and married him (1784). In 1786 she published her valuable *Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson*. Boswell writes of the Thrales: "I know no man who is more master of his wife and family than Thrale. If he but holds up a finger he is obeyed. It is a great mistake to suppose that she is above him in literary attainments. She is more flippant; but he has ten times her learning; he is a regular scholar; but her learning is that of a school-boy in one of the lower forms. My readers may naturally

PAGE

wish for some representation of the figures of this couple. Mr. Thrale was tall, well-proportioned, and stately. As for Madam, or my Mistress, by which epithets Johnson used to mention Mrs. Thrale, she was short, plump, and brisk. She has herself given us a lively view of the idea which Johnson had of her person, on her appearing before him in a dark-colored gown: 'You little creatures should never wear those sort of clothes, however; they are unsuitable in every way. What! have not all insects gay colors?' Mr. Thrale gave his wife a liberal indulgence, both in the choice of their company, and in the mode of entertaining them. He understood and valued Johnson, without remission, from their first acquaintance to the day of his death. Mrs. Thrale was enchanted with Johnson's conversation for its own sake, and had also a very allowable vanity in appearing to be honored with the attention of so celebrated a man."

34. *Southwark*: A borough of the city of London on the south side of the Thames.

Streatham Common: A suburb south of London in Johnson's time. It is now a large residential district of London proper.

35. *Buck and macaroni*: Slang phrases current in Johnson's day, nearly equivalent to our "dude."

Bath: A famous watering-place of the eighteenth century.

Brighton: A famous seaside resort.

36. *All these poor creatures were at constant war with each other*: Boswell comments on Johnson's household: "Williams hates everybody; Levett hates Desmoulins, and does not love Williams; Desmoulins hates them both; Poll loves none of them."

Mitre Tavern: A hostelry in Fleet Street, a favorite meeting-place of Johnson and Boswell. "The Mitre Tavern still stands in Fleet Street: but where now is its Scot-and-lot paying, beef-and-ale loving, cock-hatted, pot-bellied landlord; its rosy-faced, assiduous landlady, with all her shining brass pans, waxed tables, well-filled larder-shelves; her cooks, and bootjacks, and errand-boys, and watery-mouthed hangers-on? Gone! Gone! The becking waiter, that with wreathed smiles was wont to

PAGE

spread for Samuel and Bozzy their 'supper of the gods,' has long since pocketed his last sixpence; and vanished, sixpence and all, like a ghost at cockcrowing." Carlyle's review of Boswell's *Johnson*.

36. *Bore patiently from mendicants*, etc.: "His uncommon kindness to his servants, and serious concern, not only for their comfort in this world, but their happiness in the next, was another unquestionable evidence of what all who were intimately acquainted with him knew to be true.

"Nor would it be just under this head to omit the fondness he showed for animals which he had taken under his protection. I never shall forget the indulgence with which he treated Hodge, his cat; for whom he himself used to go out and buy oysters, lest the servants having that trouble should take a dislike to the poor creature. I am unluckily one of those who have an antipathy to a cat, so that I am uneasy when in the room with one; and I own I frequently suffered a good deal from the presence of the same Hodge. I recollect him one day scrambling up Dr. Johnson's breast apparently with much satisfaction, while my friend, smiling and half whistling, rubbed down his back, and pulled him by the tail; and when I observed he was a fine cat, saying, 'Why yes, sir, but I have had cats whom I like better than this'; and then, as if perceiving Hodge to be out of countenance, adding, 'but he is a very fine cat, a very fine cat indeed.'" BOSWELL.

Hebrides: The islands off the western coast of Scotland, sometimes called the Western Isles.

37. *Cries of London*: Read Addison's essay, *The Cries of London*, see Riverside Literature Series, No. 60.

The Highland line: The border between the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland.

38. *Lord Mansfield*: William Murray (1705-1793), one of the most famous lawyers of the time.

Macpherson: James Macpherson (1738-1796), published in 1762 an epic poem *Fingal* which he said was a translation from a Gaelic poet of the third century. Although the general public accepted the poem as authentic, Johnson, after investigation, declared it to be a forgery. Mac-

PAGE

pherson was challenged to produce the originals, but never did so.

39. *Kenricks . . . Hendersons*: Scotchmen who attacked Johnson: Kenrick satirized his Shakespeare; Campbell attacked his style; MacNicol and Henderson his *Journey*. *Maxime*, etc.: "I desire very much to contend with you if you are willing."

Bentley: Richard Bentley (1662-1742), master of Trinity College, Cambridge, one of the greatest English scholars of his time.

40. *Civil war*: The year 1775 was a critical one in the relations between England and her American colonies.

Almon and Stockdale: Well-known booksellers of the period.

Taxation no Tyranny: This pamphlet, *Taxation No Tyranny, An Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress*, a defense of the government policy toward the American colonies, appeared in 1775. Even Boswell condemned it.

41. *Sheridan*: Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816), noted orator and writer of comedies. His *Rivals* and *School for Scandal* are delightful pictures of eighteenth-century life. *Reynolds*: Sir Joshua Reynolds, famous for his portraits of celebrities.

Wilson: Richard Wilson (1714-1782), a Welsh landscape painter of Johnson's day.

Cowley: Abraham Cowley (1618-1667), was a popular poet in the days of Milton. Although Milton and Dryden both praised him, by Johnson's time his popularity had waned.

Button's: A popular coffee-house near Covent Garden, frequented by Addison and his friends.

Cibber: Colley Cibber (1671-1757), an actor and a dramatist who was made poet laureate during the reign of George II. He was satirized in *The Dunciad* of Pope and felt Johnson's wrath.

Orrery: John Boyle (1707-1762), fifth Earl of Orrery, wrote a biography of Swift.

Savage . . . services . . . to Pope: Johnson accuses Savage of supplying Pope with private intelligence and secret inci-

PAGE

dents. Pope, it is believed, used these personal details in *The Dunciad*.

43. *Dryden*: John Dryden (1631-1700), foremost English poet between Milton and Pope.

Gray: Thomas Gray (1716-1771), the author of *An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. He was among the first to go back to the Elizabethans instead of to Pope for models. Johnson, as a classicist, was not in sympathy with the new romantic movement.

Malone: Edmund Malone (1741-1812), a noted critic and scholar.

Robertson: William Robertson (1721-1793), one of Johnson's few Scotch friends. He was an eminent historian who closely imitated Johnson's style.

44. *Thrale was no more*: Henry Thrale died in 1781.

A music-master from Brescia: The *Encyclopædia Britannica* states that Gabriel Piozzi was a talented Italian musician and a gentleman. His marriage to Mrs. Thrale proved to be a happy one, lasting twenty-five years.

45. *In a solemn and tender prayer*: "Almighty God, Father of all mercy, help me by Thy grace, that I may with humble and sincere thankfulness remember the comforts and conveniences which I have enjoyed at this place, and that I may resign them with holy submission, equally trusting in thy protection when Thou givest and when Thou takest away. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me. To thy fatherly protection, O Lord, I commend this family. Bless, guide and defend them, that they may so pass through this world as finally to enjoy in thy presence everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen."

Ephesian matron: an allusion to a story by Petronius summarized by Jeremy Taylor in *Holy Dying*. A widow of Ephesus followed the body of her husband to the tomb, resolved to weep to death. A soldier on guard offered her refreshment and sympathy, whereupon she fell in love with him.

Hamlet: An allusion to Act III, Scene iv of *Hamlet*. The prince shows his mother the difference between his father, her dead husband, and his uncle, whom she married immediately after her husband's death.

PAGE

45. *Mont Cenis*: One of the main Alpine passes leading to Italy.

Fine but gloomy paper: The paper shows Johnson's power of moralizing in a sincere and moving way.

46. *Fear of the expense*: Johnson's memory of his early years of poverty tended to make him over-careful of money in his later years. At his death he left an estate of £2300. *Windham*: William Windham (1750-1810), a noted parliamentary lawyer.

Frances Burney: Madame D'Arblay (1752-1840), a famous novelist of Johnson's day, whose best-known work is *Evelina*. Her famous *Diary and Letters* inspired Macaulay to write his *Essay on Madame D'Arblay*.

Terror of death: "He had, indeed, an awful dread of death, or rather, 'of something after death'; and what rational man, who seriously thinks of quitting all that he has ever known, and going into a new and unknown state of being, can be without that dread? But his fear was from reflection; his courage natural. His fear, in that one instance was the result of philosophical and religious consideration. He feared death, but he feared nothing else, not even what might occasion death. Many instances of his resolution might be mentioned. One day, at Mr. Beauclerk's house in the country, when two large dogs were fighting, he went up to them, and beat them till they separated; and at another time, when told of the danger there was that a gun might burst if charged with many balls, he put in six or seven, and fired it off against a wall. Mr. Langton told me that when they were swimming together near Oxford, he cautioned Dr. Johnson against a pool which was reckoned particularly dangerous; upon which Johnson directly swam into it. He told me himself that one night he was attacked in the street by four men, to whom he would not yield, but kept them all at bay till the watch came up, and carried both him and them to the roundhouse. In the playhouse at Lichfield, as Mr. Garrick informed me, Johnson having for a moment quitted a chair which was placed for him between the side scenes, a gentleman took possession of it, and when Johnson on his return civilly demanded his seat,

PAGE

rudely refused to give it up; upon which Johnson laid hold of it, and tossed him and the chair into the pit.”
BOSWELL.

47. *Westminster Abbey*: Here eminent Englishmen are buried. It is a coveted honor for a man of letters to be buried in the Poets' Corner of the Abbey.
Cowley . . . Addison: All these writers rest near Johnson in the Abbey.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

The short sketch of Goldsmith, like the essay on Johnson, represents Macaulay at his best. There is little of the partisanship, the exaggeration, the misleading rhetoric to be found in many of the earlier essays; but there is the same fullness of knowledge, the same facility of allusion and reference, the same clarity and straightforwardness of style. As in the Johnson, there is a sympathy with the subject of his sketch.

Goldsmith shares with Charles Lamb the distinction of deserving an epithet which the French threw away upon one of their most worthless kings — the Well Beloved. Everybody reads *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *The Deserted Village*, and everybody loves their author. To acquaint himself with that author and to become familiar with the charm of that author's style should be, therefore, the pleasure as well as the duty of the high-school student.

49. *Reign of Queen Anne*: 1702–1714.

Elphin: Located in Roscommon County, Ireland.

Jaunting-car: A low-set open vehicle in which the passengers sit sidewise, back to back. It is much used in Ireland.

50. *Old quartermaster*: “Paddy” Byrne.

Banshee: In Ireland, a female fairy believed to be attached to a particular house and to foretell at each wailing appearance the death of an inmate.

Rapparee: The word means a noisy fellow. In Goldsmith's time, a vagrant or robber, a freebooter.

Peterborough and Stanhope: Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough (1658–1735), and James, Lord Stanhope

PAGE

(1673-1721), were both generals who won great reputation in Spain during the War of the Spanish Succession, especially in the battles mentioned. Peterborough had a very romantic career, and Stanhope was afterwards an important statesman.

50. *Carolan*: Turlogh Carolan (1670-1738), the most famous of the modern Irish bards.

Glorious and Immortal Memory: The formula used in the Whig toast to William III.

51. *Knowle*: Better spelled Knole, the seat of Lord Sackville in Kent, one of the finest baronial halls in England. The portrait mentioned is by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Fellows: Graduate students who are also members of the faculty.

Wool-sack . . . Episcopal bench: That is, having become Lord Chancellors or Bishops sitting in the House of Peers.

52. *Had sailed without him*: Compare with the adventures of Moses in *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

A generous kinsman: His uncle by marriage, the Reverend Thomas Contarine.

53. *Edinburgh*: The university of that city, noted for its school of medical science.

Fontenelle: Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757), a noted French writer.

54. *East India Company*: A company organized in England for trade in India, first chartered by Elizabeth in 1600.

55. *Beau Nash*: Richard Nash (1674-1761) was a celebrated leader of fashion, a predecessor of "Beau" Brummel.

56. *The Club*: Dr. Johnson's famous club.

Inns of Court: The four sets of buildings in London (the Inner Temple, the Middle Temple, Lincoln's Inn, Gray's Inn) belonging to the four societies of students and practitioners of the law in England.

59. *False Delicacy*: by Hugh Kelly (1739-1777), a small author with whom Goldsmith's relations were not pleasant.

Sentimentality was all the mode: Goldsmith himself says: "Comedy of the eighteenth century became a very grave and solemn entertainment, without any low wit, or humor, or jests; in which there was not anything which could provoke a laugh."

PAGE

59. *The Rehearsal*: A satiric play brought out in 1672 by George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham (1628-1687). It was chiefly an attack on Dryden, whom the hero, Bayes, was supposed to personate.
Systems of natural philosophy: The *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius, based on the Epicurean philosophy.
60. *Kent*: A county in the southeastern part of England.
Munster: A county in Ireland.
The manager: George Colman the Elder (1733-1794), himself a dramatist, and so harder to please.
61. *Incomparable farce in five acts*: Forster in his *Life and Adventures of Goldsmith* tells of the incident in Goldsmith's youth on which *She Stoops to Conquer* is based.
Cumberland: Richard Cumberland (1732-1811), a successful but now nearly forgotten playwright. In his *Memoirs* he gives an amusing account of how he, with some of Goldsmith's other friends, headed by Dr. Johnson, went to the theater prepared to make the play go through by their applause.
Hoaxed: By Gibbon, the historian.
Alexander the Great: King of Macedon (336-323 B.C.).
Montezuma: Last Aztec emperor of Mexico (1503-1520).
Patagonians: Inhabitants of the southern part of Argentina, South America.
62. *Maupertuis*: Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis (1698-1759), a noted French mathematician and astronomer.
The best society of the kingdom: The Club, which centered about Dr. Johnson. For the members, see note on the essay on Johnson, page 84.
63. *Horace Walpole*: Letter-writer, wit, and critic (1717-1797).
64. *George Steevens*: A well-known Shakespearean scholar (1736-1800).
65. *Wealth of Lord Clive and Sir Lawrence Dundas*: Sir Lawrence Dundas seems to have been a contractor to the army in Germany from 1748 to 1759, who amassed great wealth and was knighted in 1762, dying in 1781.
His purse ready for any tale of distress: *The Man in Black*, one of the essays in *The Citizen of the World*, is an excellent picture of Goldsmith.

PAGE

67. *Provoked into retaliating*: In February, 1774, a party of his friends, dining at the St. James coffee-house without him, undertook to write some humorous epitaphs on Goldsmith. Garrick contributed the couplet:

"Here lies Nolly Goldsmith, for shortness called Noll,
Who wrote like an angel, and talked like poor Poll."

Goldsmith's delightful *Retaliation* was the outcome of the incident.

He gives us his friends thus: Burke:

Too nice for a statesman, too proud for a wit,
For a patriot too cool, for a drudge disobedient,
Too fond of the *right* to pursue the *expedient*.

Garrick:

On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting,
'Twas only that when he was off, he was acting.

Reynolds:

Manners were gentle, complying and bland.

Nollekens: Joseph Nollekens (1737-1823).

Goldsmith's writings: Johnson paid tribute to his genius in these words, "He left scarcely any style of writing untouched, and touched nothing that he did not adorn."

68. *Lyttelton*: George, Lord Lyttelton (1709-1773), a better prose writer than poet.

Mr. Prior: James Prior (1790-1869).

Mr. Forster: John Forster (1812-1876), an indefatigable biographer. He wrote lives of Landor and Dickens among others. His *Goldsmith* appeared in 1848.

QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

I. *Johnson's Early Life* (pages 1-8).

What characteristics of mind and temperament did Johnson exhibit during his boyhood?

What was the cause of many of his peculiarities?

With what difficulty did he have to contend because of his malady?

What do we learn of his family and home conditions?

What were the circumstances of his going to Oxford? Of his choice of Pembroke College?

What qualities of mind and personality did he display at Oxford?

Explain the circumstances of his leaving Oxford.

Explain Johnson's financial condition at the beginning of the period of thirty years of struggle. What efforts did he make to earn a livelihood? With what success?

What peculiarities resulted from the aggravation of his physical disability? What was the effect of this malady on his attitude toward life? On his literary power?

What new traits of character are brought out in his affection for Mrs. Porter?

What was the effect of his marriage upon his fortunes?

Who are some of the friends mentioned in these early years?

What picture is given of the age in which Johnson lived?

What biographic facts does Macaulay emphasize?

II. *Johnson's Early Struggle in London* (pages 8-13).

What made a literary career so hazardous at the time when Johnson went to London?

What was the attitude in the preceding generation of the government toward writers?

What conditions had changed this attitude?

Why was it unusual for a writer in the eighteenth century to make a good living by literary work?

Describe Johnson's early struggles in London.

Where does Macaulay throw his emphasis here — on the life of Johnson, or the time in which he lived? Give specific evidence from the essay.

III. *Johnson's Early Literary Work* (pages 13-18).

With what literary production did Johnson first attract attention?

In what respect did this book mirror his own experiences?

Whom did he imitate? Whom did he parallel?

As a result of this book what attempts were made to better his fortunes? With what success?

Mention some of Johnson's associates at this time. What were some of their outstanding characteristics?

Who was Richard Savage? What attracted Johnson to him?

What is meant by "catchpenny lives"? How did Johnson improve upon them?

To what more important work did Johnson's biography of Savage pave the way?

Who was the Earl of Chesterfield? What were Johnson's relations with him? What bitter disappointment did Johnson suffer at his hands?

During the years that the *Dictionary* was in progress, what other literary work did Johnson produce? What was its theme?

Who was David Garrick? What was his connection with Johnson?

What excursion in playwriting did Johnson make? With what result?

IV. *The Period of Success* (pages 19-26).

Name some of the periodicals of Johnson's time. How did he associate himself with this type of writing?

What more famous periodical does *The Rambler* resemble?

What are the plan and characteristics of *The Rambler*?

In what respect was *The Spectator* superior to *The Rambler*?

What great sorrow came to Johnson at this time? How did this affect his feeling toward the completion of his great literary work — the *Dictionary*?

How did the literary world receive the *Dictionary*? How did Lord Chesterfield try to make amends?

Why did it require courage to bring forth the *Dictionary* without a dedication at this particular time in literary history?

What praise does Macaulay give the *Dictionary*? What defects does he point out? How did the publication of the *Dictionary* affect Johnson's fortunes?

What periodical followed *The Rambler*? How did it compare with its predecessor?

Under what circumstances was *Rasselas* written? How was it received? What is its theme? What are its faults? Why is it, nevertheless, a classic?

V. *The Period of Decline* (pages 26-43).

What does Macaulay tell us of the politics of the period beginning 1762?

How did Johnson show himself inconsistent?

What is a pension? What was the immediate effect on Johnson of his receiving a pension? What comment did he himself make?

What promise had he long delayed fulfilling? What was the spur which goaded him to activity?

What comment does Macaulay make on the edition of Shakespeare?

What faults does he point out? How did the public receive the edition?

What material benefits accrued to Johnson?

What great contrast is apparent between Johnson, the writer, and Johnson, the talker?

What opportunity was given him to exercise his talent for conversation?

What subjects did he most like to discuss?

Identify and characterize the members of his club.

What characteristics in Johnson made him a natural leader of his club?

What foreshadowing of this power was evident in Oxford?

From the point of view of Johnson's literary immortality, who was the most important member? Why?

What pen-picture does Macaulay give of this man? Are you satisfied with it?

Who was Henry Thrale? In what way was Johnson's life made happier by his friendship with the Thrales?

What picture of Johnson's own home life does Macaulay give us? Who were the inhabitants of Johnson's home? What quality in Johnson is revealed by his kindness to these people?

What important journey did he make? Why? Who accompanied him?

What were the results of the trip? In what way did he antagonize Scotch writers of his day? Whom, in particular, did he offend?

How did Johnson prove himself unfit for political controversy?

What were his literary tastes? What invitation was extended to him more suited to his abilities?

What is Macaulay's comment on *The Lives of the Poets*?

What contrast between the *Life of Savage* and the shorter *Lives* is evident?

What *Lives* stand out as the best in Macaulay's opinion? Which does he characterize as the poorest? Why might this naturally be true?

VI and VII. *Last Years and Death — Assured Position of Johnson* (pages 43-47).

What made sorrowful the closing years of Johnson's life?

Why was he so bitter against Mrs. Thrale?

How do you account for his lifelong fear of death?

What evidence is given in the essay of a strong religious feeling on his part?

What can we judge of Johnson from the friendships he made and maintained?

Where is Johnson buried?

Which of his works have lasted into the twentieth century? Why?
What does Macaulay give as his real claim to fame? What is the final impression left with us?

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND REPORT

1. Endeavor through reading *Tom Brown's School Days* (Thomas Arnold) or *Jeremy at Crale* (Hugh Walpole) to get a good idea of the life led by a student in a great English public school. Contrast this kind of school with a representative private school in America.
2. Investigate and report on other great authors who, handicapped by fortune, nevertheless made a name for themselves.
3. Examine a few pages of Johnson's *Dictionary* and contrast the style and substance with that of some great modern dictionary.
4. Report definitely on the standing and achievement of each of the members of Johnson's Club.
5. Examine some of the essays of *The Rambler*. Examine some of the essays in *The Spectator*. Defend or refute Macaulay's statement in paragraph 25: "On the question of precedence — no appeal."
6. Investigate the part played by Dr. Johnson in the publication of Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*.
7. Contrast the positions taken by Johnson and Burke with regard to the struggle of the American Colonies against Great Britain.
8. Why is it impossible in our day for any one person to become a literary dictator such as Johnson was?
9. After your reading of these essays, what is your estimate of Macaulay as a critic of men and of literature?
10. By definite reference to Boswell's *Biography*, trace Macaulay's debt to him as a source.
11. Report upon the social life of the middle eighteenth century, emphasizing particularly the part played by (1) the spas; (2) the man of fashion; (3) the theaters; (4) the taverns and coffee houses; (5) the periodical.

THEME TOPICS

A Literary Adventurer in 1735
An Usher in a Grammar School
Theaters of the Eighteenth Century
An Evening at the Mitre Tavern
The London of Johnson's Day

The Literary Club Meets at Sir Joshua's
 Peculiarities of Genius
 The House at Gough Square
 Johnson and Goldsmith
 Johnson and the Thrales
 Johnson's Strange Household
 Johnson's Influence Upon his Time
 Johnson's Style as Writer and Talker: A Contrast
 Boswell's Biography: A Model
 What is Meant by Literary Dictatorship?

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- Adcock, St. John. *Taverns, Houses, and Literary Shrines of London*. Dutton, 1912.
- Ashton, John. *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*. Scribner, 1883.
- Bailey, John Cann. *Dr. Johnson and his Circle*. Holt, 1913.
- Barrington, E. J. *The Ladies; The Gallants*. Little, Brown, 1924.
- Boswell, James. *Life of Samuel Johnson*. (1) 2 vols., Everyman's Library, Dutton; (2) 2 vols., Roger Ingpen. Sturgis & Walton; (3) Illustrated. Dutton, 1925.
- Burney, Fanny. *Evelina*. Illustrated by Hugh Thomson. Macmillan.
- De Morgan, Wm. *An Affair of Dishonor*. Holt, 1910.
- Doyle, A. Conan. *Redney Stone*. Appleton, 1924.
- Goldsmith, Oliver. *Vicar of Wakefield*. Dutton, 1926. *She Stoops to Conquer*. Merrill, 1925.
- Irving, Washington. *Life of Goldsmith*. Putnam, 1912.
- Jenks, Tudor. *In the Days of Goldsmith*. A. S. Barnes & Co.
- Loubban, J. H. *Dr. Johnson's Mrs. Thrale*. T. N. Foulis, London, 1910.
- Merrington, Marguerite. *Vicar of Wakefield — A Play*. Duffield, 1909.
- Mitchell, Donald G. *English Lands, Letters, and Kings*. Scribner, 1912.
- Moore, F. F. *The Jessamy Bride*. Duffield, 1926.
- Newton, A. Edward. *Dr. Johnson: A Play*. Atlantic Monthly Press, 1923.
- Newton, A. Edward. *Ghosts of Gough Square; Amenities of Book Collecting*. Atlantic Monthly Press.
- Quennell, Marjorie and C. H. B. *A History of Everyday Things in England (1066-1799)*. Scribner, 1922.
- Reade, Charles. *Peg Woffington*. Everyman's Library, Dutton, 1907.
- Sabatini, R. *The Lion's Skin*. Houghton Mifflin, 1926.
- Tarkington, Booth. *Monsieur Beaucaire*. Doubleday, 1915.

Thackeray, Wm. M. *Henry Esmond*. Edited by Lewis Melville with original illustrations. Macmillan. *The Virginians*. Macmillan. *Barry Lindon*. Macmillan.
Tinker, C. B. *Young Boswell*. Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922.
Thomas, Augustus. *Oliver Goldsmith: A Comedy*. French, 1916.
Weyman, Stanley. *Shrewsbury*. Longmans, 1898. *Sophia*. Longmans, 1900. *Castle Inn*. Longmans, 1898.

QUESTIONS FROM RECENT COLLEGE ENTRANCE BOARD EXAMINATIONS¹

1. "Never since literature became a calling in England had it been a less gainful calling than at the time when Johnson took up his residence in London." How does Macaulay account for this condition? How did the situation affect Johnson?
2. From your study of Macaulay's essay explain in what ways "the memory of Johnson keeps many of his works alive."
3. Name and briefly characterize four works of Samuel Johnson, each representing a different kind of composition.
4. After your reading of this essay, what should you say of Macaulay as a critic of men and of literature?
5. Mention three literary qualities of Johnson's and three of Macaulay's, as shown by Macaulay's *Life of Johnson*, and comment in detail, and by reference to the work, on any one of these six qualities.
6. Write on one of the following: (a) Handicaps which make Johnson's success remarkable. (b) Macaulay's skill as a writer.
7. Give some account of Johnson's friends, and explain their admiration of him and his influence among them.
8. What effect did Johnson's final prosperity have on his work and on his social intercourse?
9. Comment on the part played by the Club and by the Thrales in Johnson's life.
10. Montaigne said, in regard to his essays, "It is myself that I portray." Show how this quotation might be applied to an essay by Macaulay.

¹ Copyright by the College Entrance Examination Board. Used by permission.

style of Macaulay -

It is very rapid in spite of this it is full of material
it is erudite - it is brilliant especially in
portraiture of men - it is unfortunately exaggerated
for effect - and you can't believe anything which is said

It is a model of fine paragraph structure -
topic sentences are followed all the way through in
detail



S0-ALM-984

